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MRS. CURGENVEN OF CURGENVEN.

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CHAPTER LII.

THROWING UP THE BALL.

WITH difficulty Esther Morideg was drawn out of the beehive hut in which she had taken refuge. Her clothes were soaked, she was in a fever, and delirious. The wet, the exposure, the cold, hunger, had driven her temporarily from her senses.

Tregaskis, constable though he was, treated the poor girl with great kindness, spoke gently, caressingly to her, told her not to be frightened; that he and the others would get her to a house where she would be put into a warm bed, and made comfortable. She did not heed him. She seized Justinian by the arm, and drew him to her, and muttered hoarsely, 'I'll die game. Tell her so. I'll not speak a word.'

'I have a flask of sherry with me,' said the boy. 'Let her have some—she must be starving.'

'She is in a fever,' said Tregaskis. 'Now, sir, we must carry her, or get her to walk between us all the way; or will you run on to Trevillian's gate and bring your cart over the down to under Rough Tor? I think it can be got so far.'

'I'll do it,' said Justinian.

'And—look here, sir! We'll just be so bold as to borrow the cart of you to take her anyways as far as to Five Lanes. She can't be brought on foot that distance. Very considerate of you, sir, to bring the trap for us.'

'I will do what I can,' said Justinian, biting his lips. 'Of course, there is but one thing now to be done—to see that she be cared for, and have the doctor to her. She is very ill.'

He hurried away down the mountain side. He was angry with himself, angry with Tregaskis. Instead of being the means of helping Esther to escape from the moors, he had, like a fool—he said that to himself—led the police to where she was concealed, and he was the only person who could have done so, for no one else had a notion where she was.

But after the first ebullition of vexation at his mismanagement of the commission given him, he recovered. The girl was seriously ill. What could he have done, had he found her in this condition without some one at his back to assist him? What, under the circumstances, could have been done save remove her to a place where she would be attended to? He could not have allowed her to remain in her cell on the mountain top, among the clouds, there to die in fever and delirium. He must have gone in quest of assistance, and assistance brought there meant the revelation of her place of retreat, her removal, and consignment to the custody of the police. After all considered and said, what had happened was perhaps the best thing that could have happened. What would have been the fate of the poor girl but for him? How could her life have been preserved but for him? How would the police have found her but for him? On all sides a debt of obligation was due to him. So he held up his head once more, and felt that he was a person of importance.

The sick girl was brought to Five Lanes, and Justinian insisted on Tregaskis taking her in his trap; he would hire another, and one far less convenient, at the inn for himself. So he was left behind, and the constable with his charge, and another policeman, went on towards Curgenven. He, Justinian, waited till a clumsy horse was put into a still more clumsy two-wheeled conveyance, and in this he was driven at a slow jog towards his home.

'After all,' growled Justinian, 'that precious noodle, Tregaskis, has brought to Mrs. Rowe, of Five Lanes, more than the half-crown I calculated on spending there. I shall have to give seven-and-six, and a bob to the driver, for this beastly trap.'

The son of the landlady at Five Lanes drove him, but Justinian was in no humour for conversation. Not only was he wet and chilled after the walk and after having become hot in the scramble, but the temporary elation, that had followed on his

depression at having been the vehicle for the discovery and arrest of Esther, passed off, and he began to realise for the first time in his life that he had played a sorry figure—that in the first place he had made a fool of himself in giving occasion of talk relative to himself and Esther, to such an extent as to have led Tregaskis to watch him, with the conviction that through him the whereabouts of the girl might be discovered.

In the next place, it was a humiliation to his self-esteem to feel that he had been outwitted by the 'owl,' the 'idiot,' the 'jackass,' whom he had treated with such impertinence, and to know that he had placed himself at this man's mercy. Tregaskis could, if he chose, make the matter unpleasant not for him only, but also for his father. It would indeed be a scandal if it became public that he, the son of a justice of the peace, had been aiding Esther to evade capture on a warrant issued by his own father.

A bitter medicine is the humiliation of self-esteem, and the more bitter the greater the self-esteem is. Justinian had not valued himself, his abilities, his position, at a low figure, and the consciousness of his having blundered egregiously was to him now as wormwood.

But conceited though he was, his nature was healthy and his heart right, and by the time he had reached Curgenven he had resolved on what he would do. Instead of going directly home, he drove to the constabulary residence, and there dismissed the trap. In the cottage lived Tregaskis with his sister, considerably older than himself, who kept house for him. Justinian entered, and was told that Esther was being cared for by Miss Tregaskis, a clean, kind-hearted, energetic, and sensible woman, and that the doctor had been summoned and was momentarily expected.

'Look here, constable,' said Justinian, 'I'll tell you what I have come for, not only to ask after the poor girl, but to beg your pardon. I've not behaved right to you. Now, if you choose, you can make it hot for me. However, let no considerations one way or the other influence you; do what is your duty. If you think it well to say that because there had been some silly chatter about me and Esther, you watched me so as to discover her retreat, you are welcome. I know she is innocent. I have evidence that will at once clear her. Knowing that, I went to find her. I could not account for her running away. As for the chatter, it is not well founded. Miss Alice, my cousin, and I have both pitied and liked the girl, so has my stepmother, and

when all the rest of the world went against her, we rather held to her, and believed in her. I don't want any sort of nasty gossip to grow out of this, there has been enough of idle talk already; it will deepen into something worse if it comes out that you followed me in order to find where she hid. As far as I am concerned, if I have given occasion for such talk, I must bear it, but it will injure *her*. And it will trouble my dear father exceedingly. There you have it in a nutshell. If you can, without breach of duty, spare us, I shall be for ever grateful to you; if you can't, well, I must bear it, and so must my father, who will, I suppose, resign his magistracy. But, first of all, consider what is your duty, and do that. As for the past, and my impertinence to you, an officer under the Queen, I heartily, unreservedly say—I am sorry, and ask your forgiveness. There's my hand.'

Tregaskis saluted, he was too modest to accept the proffered hand of the young squire, but he said:

'Sir, Mr. Justinian, I am touched. You may rely on me. I will not say a word beyond what I am obliged. I am heartily rejoiced to hear that you can clear Esther Morideg. I, myself, have had my doubts about her guilt, for I have learned that the lodge-keeper saw Mr. Physic go towards the Hall only twenty minutes or half an hour before he was proved dead, and the gardener saw him near the Bungalow. Besides, the butler says he called at the house to inquire after Mrs. Curgenven. All which points to suicide rather than murder.'

'Then I can swear,' said Justinian, 'that the pistol was in its place on the rack an hour before, as I was in the smoking-room of the Bungalow after my gun, and saw it there. So that, unless Esther were seen going to the Bungalow within that hour, the case against her falls to the ground; and unless the bench be as great owls as coroner and jury, they will see that, and dismiss the case against Esther.'

'There are difficulties still—what she said to the dowager Mrs. Curgenven. But I dare say the girl saw what took place, and was frightened, and ran away, thinking that in some fashion the seeing Mr. Physic shoot himself would bring her to trouble. Can't say—it may be so. But as to yourself, sir, I'll not say anything I needn't say, not only for your own sake, but for hers. Poor maid, she's suffered enough already, and is now terrible off her head. I reckon she must have been days and nights in soaking clothes, without fire or food. She's got a rare constitution, but it would

want that of a rhinoceros to pull through such contraries as she has undergone.'

Justinian walked off. 'Tregaskis is not such a bad fellow as I thought him,' he commented, 'nor quite such a fool as I supposed; he'll get on in his profession. I'll speak to the governor to give him a leg up.'

On reaching home the hour was late, past the dinner-hour, but his father was not below. The butler told Justinian that Mr. Curgenven was upstairs with the doctor from Plymouth. The boy hastily dressed, glad to relieve himself of his sopping clothes, and then ran down again, to find his father with the doctor descending the great staircase.

'Above all,' said the latter, 'she must not be agitated. Any shock, any strain might be fatal. I don't say she may not pull through—but you must be careful. Mind this—the best doctor, the best nurse, are absence from anxiety and from worry; negative nurse and negative doctor, but keep her amused.'

Justinian could say nothing to his father at dinner, the medical man was there, and in a hurry, as he had to catch a train, but he saw that his father's face was grave, his mind abstracted, so that he either did not hear or found no humour in the doctor's jokes.

When the latter was gone, Justinian went to his father, took his hand and said, 'Governor, is she very bad?'

Percival pressed his son's hand and his lip quivered, he could not speak.

'May I go and see her to-night, gov.?''

At that moment the door opened, and the servant who was acting as nurse came in, and said that her mistress was very anxious to see Mr. Justinian, if he were returned.

'Go, old boy,' said Percival. 'It will fidget her if she does not see you. I say,' he drew his son to his side, 'you won't mind, will you, giving her a kiss; she will value it. She hasn't but me who cares a snap for her, I mean. She will be pleased, you know, and perhaps you mayn't have many chances.' He could not say more, he gulped something down. 'Justin, she does like you. Now don't excite her, be very quiet. But if you could kiss her, it would be better than a sleeping draught. I know it would give her so much pleasure. I don't know what I shall do—but go along, don't keep her waiting.'

On entering his stepmother's room, Justinian saw her sitting

where he had left her many hours before, in the same attitude, the same picture of mute despair, a small dark figure in the large room decorated with light curtains and paper, her dark hair shining doubly dark against her white face and throat. He was touched, and stepping over to her, stood behind the chair, leaned forward, took her head between his hands, and kissed it.

A flush of colour rose into her pale cheeks, and a light smile formed on her lips.

'Dear mother—dear, dear mother,' he said, fondling her thin white fingers, 'you must get well, you must do so for my father's sake and mine. The governor is in a dreadful take on about you. 'Pon my word, I don't know what he would do without you. There—you really will make an effort to shake this off. It's only a good lusty effort is needed to make the dad and me happy again.'

'Dear Justin,' said Theresa, 'I would do anything for him—anything I could—and for you. I love you both. I have no one else to love. But now tell me, what have you done?'

'I must not excite you. That old codger, Tonks, said so.'

'I shall be far more excited if I do not know what has taken place. I shall fret and work myself into a fever.'

'Oh, my dear mother, you are too cold and white to get into a fever through any amount of excitement. I have just seen fever, what it really is, and you might as well talk of scrambling up Salisbury steeple as of getting into a fever.'

'I really must know.'

'And I really do not think I ought to tell you.'

She looked steadily at him out of her great dark eyes.

'Indeed, Justin, it would kill me to be left in suspense.'

He seated himself, as he had done once before, at the time when they had made peace, on a stool by her side, looking up into her face.

'Hang it! I don't know what to do. I've gone boggling about doing the wrong things all day, and chaps I've turned up my nose at have had twice as much wits as myself. And now—here am I, I heard old Tonks say you were not to be agitated, that it was as much as your life was worth to be excited, that you must be left in the most complete repose.'

'But I cannot repose; I shall not sleep a wink till I know all. Where is Esther?'

'Must I say?' The boy looked at her disconsolately. 'If I

do you harm, I shall never know an hour's peace. My dear mother, I have such a pain in my heart now because you are ill. I cannot endure more, indeed I cannot.'

'You have bad tidings, and fear to tell me. Tell me all, or I shall imagine something far worse than the reality.'

'Well, if it must be. Esther is in the hands of the police.'

Theresa dropped her hands on her lap, and looking dreamily before her said, 'I thought it would come to that in time.'

'She is in high fever. The poor girl has suffered dreadful exposure, and has undergone great privation. When she was found, she was delirious, and she is so still.'

'She did all in her power for me. I will not desert her.'

Theresa spoke in a tone of weariness and resignation.

'You know,' said Justinian, 'there is no reason why all should come out, if you don't wish it; and, of course, it is better it should not. It is only to trail a red herring across the path, and the police will go after it like a pack of hounds.'

'It must all come to light now,' said Theresa. 'I fought against it as long as I could, but it is over—I mean fighting. I have not the strength. It must all come out.'

She spoke calmly.

'I say, I hope this won't upset you, and prevent your sleeping to-night.'

'No, I had made up my mind for it. I knew it must come. I have felt it here'—she touched her heart—'a sort of something here that told me to—to throw up the ball.'

'I am so glad you are not agitated.'

'No. I am past that. I should have been agitated unless I had been told all. Now, it is as well as it is. You will see Esther, tell her——'

'She is not in her senses.'

'Yes, I remember, you said so. When she is herself again, assure her that she shall get into no further trouble. I will tell all.'

'But there is really no necessity.'

With a faint smile Theresa said, 'There is no more game after the ball is thrown up. I throw up the ball.'

'Esther keeps on repeating that she will be silent. That is what her heated brain holds to.'

'More reason why I should speak. Justin, dear'—she put her hand out to him and he clasped it—'Justin, dear, it is to me an in-

finite comfort that you have got over your prejudices against me, and that you like me. You will never believe I did this thing intentionally. I did it without knowing what I did, and I was fighting your battle and your dear father's, though you were both unaware of it. You will find that out now. To-morrow, it is too late now, to-morrow morning let the Rector and Mrs. Jane come here. I want to see them all, and tell all before them and your father and you. You will go for them ?'

'If I must.'

'I wish it. And now—good night. Kiss me once again, Justin, it does me good.'

CHAPTER LIII.

THE END OF THE WILL.

At breakfast next morning Justinian asked his father how the patient was.

'She has had a quiet night ; she is getting up now, and told me to remind you to bring old Pamphlet and Jane. What she wants with Jane, I can't think ; about the last person I'd like to see. And Jane is not the person to come here, unless to gloat over Theresa's illness.'

It was unusual for Percival to speak harshly of anyone, but he made an exception relative to Jane Curgenven. When he did say sharp things, it was with a jaunty, good-humoured air, that showed those who heard him that he did not mean what his words implied ; but it was otherwise now. His tone was full of bitterness as he referred to the dowager Mrs. Curgenven.

'I believe that woman, if my dear wife were dying, would'—Percival tore the toast he held in his hands to pieces, and ground his heel into the floor—'no, Justin, I won't speak of her. She makes my blood boil. She is one of your self-righteous people who believe no one can be a good Christian and respectable who does not hector and lecture the poor, take a class at Sunday-school, and believe in missionaries. Justin, I've knocked a good deal about the world, and for narrowness, spitefulness, lack of charity, commend me to your professional angels.'

Percival's hand quivered with anger. He said more in his wrath than he really felt when cool, just as sometimes in his jokes he gave vent to sentiments he did not seriously entertain.

'Justin, in the Arctic regions the Esquimaux wear a sort of wooden spectacle, with a tiny slit in each eye-piece, and they see nothing but what comes just within the radius of this slit, and that they see only for harpooning purposes. It is so with creatures of the Jane Curgenven type.' He thrust away his plate. 'I've lost my appetite. I have done breakfast.'

'Please, sir, a gentleman wants to see you,' the butler spoke, standing in the door.

'Who is it?'

'I think, sir, it is the young Mr. Physic.'

'Oh! show him into the study. Stay—no—show him in here, he must have ridden or driven over, and may like a snack.'

In another moment a youth was introduced, dressed in mourning, but in mourning of the most groom-like cut—short coat, tight breeches buttoned down over the calves, a black silk tie with a horseshoe pin in it.

'Do, sir?' said young Physic. 'Come early, I know. Heaps of business since my poor uncle's affair. Awful affair his. Amount of business to me overwhelming. I'm not used to it.'

'Are you going on with his business?'

'I! Lawk no! Haven't the head for it. Never took to an office. My uncle at one time did offer me a place at his desk, but kicked me out before the fortnight was well over. Sell his business. Hope I shall get an offer. Anyhow, I'm clearing out, that's why I came over. Here's something I've jumped on I s'pose concerns you. Here you are.' He fumbled in his breast-pocket and pulled out a long envelope.

'Mr. Physic, you must have had a long drive or ride.'

'I rode.'

'Then surely you will be glad of a little refreshment. We are rather late at breakfast to-day. My poor wife is very unwell, and it has upset our arrangements.'

'Thanks, I'll peck a bit.' Mr. Physic drew a chair to the table.

'I say, I found that paper there in my uncle's desk. It has "Curgenven" on it. Will, or something of the sort. I don't want it, you may have it. I suppose it belongs to you. I know nothing about these sort of things. I'm clearing out; as soon as decent I'm going to marry, and set up here—I mean at Liskeard. Livery stables is my notion. Pot a lot of money that way and enjoy life. That's the straight tip, eh?'

'Why, preserve me! This is a will—it is dear old Lambert's will!' exclaimed Percival.

'I dare say it is. S'pose so. Looks like it; smells like it. I hate all your legal papers, make me sick. Give me a stable, that's your true home for a man of taste.'

'Why, murder!' exclaimed Percival. 'It is the very will old Fizz—I beg pardon, I mean Mr. Physic—flourished with, and thought with it to scare me and my poor wife.'

'Ah! I'm glad you like it. Thought 'twas something in your way,' said the heir of Physic. 'Now, I'll trouble you—let me see, Mr. Justinian, you cater—to a kidney, and some of the toast under. To my mind, there ain't nothing as 'll beat toast under kidney, well saturated and hot.'

'I'm afraid this is not quite hot,' said Justinian.

'Never mind; it would be better hot, but it's good as it is. I'll thank you for the potato chips, they look scrumptious.'

'Justin!' said Percival, 'run with all your legs to the rectory and fetch the Venerable Pam and Jane. They must see this, and, by George! we shall have to put heads together and consider what is to be done. I'll attend to Mr. Physic.'

'You haven't,' said Mr. Physic, 'just a nip of something warmer than that chilled coffee, have you? I've had a long ride.'

'I think I can serve you,' said Percival. 'By Jove! this is a perplexing affair. I don't know what to say to it, and which way to take it. I don't even know whether the will is a genuine article, or got up just to scare, like a turnip-head with a candle inside. Run along, Justin. 'Pon my word, I've a great mind to tell Theresa. It might interest her, and she's awfully dull up there in her room. It can't excite her harmfully, and it might be a stimulant to her jaded interest. I'm shot if I won't try it. Tonks said she was to be kept amused. You will help yourself, and excuse me, Mr. Physic.'

'Certainly, certainly, sir; make yourself quite at home with me. I never stand on ceremony myself, in my little box.' Percival went upstairs.

'My dearest,' he said, 'such a joke!—actually old Fizz was right. There *was* a will.'

His wife looked up into his face lovingly, but with little inquiry in it.

'I mean--don't you remember?—Physic frightened you once with hinting that there had been a will made by Lambert that

left everything to Jane and Alice. Well, there was such a will.'

'Yes, I knew it. But where is the joke?'

'Well, it's a grim sort of joke too, for I suppose it turns me out of Curgenven. But I haven't mastered the contents, only old Fizz did not speak without grounds as I supposed.'

'And the will——'

'Here it is. It has turned up. A cub of a nephew has come in for all Physic's property, and has found it, and brought it here. He understands nothing about it, all his thoughts are on horses.'

Percival put the will into his wife's hands, and she laid it unopened on her lap.

'I know its contents, Percy,' she said. 'It beggars you. You will have to begin the world again.'

'For myself I don't care, but for you, T——'

'For me?' She looked wistfully at him for a while, and then said, 'If I were young and strong, and this came on us, I would not blink, but say, that at your dear side I would face the world. We would go somewhere—anywhere—together, and your hands and mine together would avail to find us bread. But now, Percy, it is too late. All my strength is spent, my confidence is gone.'

She turned the paper over and over with her waxlike fingers.

'Percy!' she continued after a pause, 'I knew about this, but you have little idea how I strove to obtain it, and what I did to get it.'

'Why, T——?'

'Why? Oh, I was so afraid of it being produced, when you, who are so happy here, and so completely now in the right place, would be thrown out with nothing.'

'My darling, I fall on my feet everywhere. I do not require much to be happy, so long as I have you and Justin.'

'You do not require much, but you do require something, and what have you got?'

He did not answer. In his careless manner he had not thought out the consequences to himself.

'And, T—— darling, if you had got this will, what would you have done with it?'

'Burnt it.'

'Then I am glad you never did get it. That would not have been right.'

'But Jane would have nothing to say to it. Even the bribe

of Curgenven would not induce her to accept the position as a condition for receiving it. Who was harmed ?'

'That was not the question. It was Lambert's will.'

'Yes, Lambert's will.' She turned the paper over on her lap. 'I have read it through. It was written under the supposition that I was alive, and had made my presence known and felt. Not a word, from beginning to end, of love, of consideration for me. Not one farthing left to provide necessities for his real wife, the woman he had sworn to cherish, for richer for poorer—whom he had vowed to endow with all his worldly goods. All was to go to the other woman, to indemnify her for the fraud he had committed on her, as if no fraud had been committed on me in deserting me, a poor young thing, in leaving me helpless in the world, and not asking even what became of me. I had no reason, Percy, to respect his wishes.'

'My dear, Lambert is dead.'

'Yes, he is dead.'

A pause ensued. She was looking straight before her into vacancy.

'It seems to me plain as daylight, T——,' said Percival. 'Old Lambert had this property left him unreservedly, and he could give it to whom he chose. He intended it to go to Alice. That was his wish, and he had a right to leave it to her. Now I know that for certain, I will clear out whenever required. I can always accomodate myself to circumstances.'

She gave him back the will, and said :—

'You, with your clear eyes, always see what is right. Yes, do as you think best. I was wrong, very wrong to meddle in the matter ; but I did it for all your sakes. I loved you—not Jane—you and Justin.'

The servant tapped at the door.

'The Rector and Mrs. Lambert Curgenven are in the drawing-room.'

'I will be down at once,' said Percival. 'Good-bye for a few minutes, T——. I'll give old Pam and his daughter the will, and pack off young Fizz, then I will be up with you again.'

'I wish to see the Rector and Jane.'

'They shall come with me.'

She held his hand.

'I am so sorry, so sorry, dear Percival. I have another great trouble for you.'

'Troubles do not oppress me greatly,' said Mr. Curgenven, and left the room.

As Percival entered the parlour, the Rector stepped forward with a benignant smile, 'How are you, my dear Percival, and how is your wife? I hear a bad account of her from everyone. What is it? Has she caught a chill?'

'I have brought you something that will astonish you,' said Percival, not answering the questions. He caught an eager look in Jane Curgenven's eye, and thought, perhaps unjustly, that she was hoping the news relating to Theresa would be bad—had come there with the desire to hear she was in danger. Why, otherwise, that keen flash in her eye?

Percival was prejudiced, and he would not shake hands with her, or notice her; he spoke to her father alone.

'That old fellow, Physic, left his debts and his receipts, his bills and banking account, to a snob of a nephew who won't take on the business. This fellow has been rummaging in Physic's desks and cupboards, and has come on the paper that I hold. You shall look at it. Physic said something about it to me, but I thought it was all gammon, and gave it no great heed. However, here the document is. I have just shown it to Theresa. Physic had been scaring her with it, so she says. Look, it purports to be a will of Lambert, in which he leaves everything to Alice. I suppose it is all right. You take it and read it over between you. I have left the young Fizz in the breakfast-room with the spirit case open, and I must see to him.'

Then Percival left the apartment.

Mrs. Jane pursed up her lips and planted her feet flat on the carpet.

'Now then, papa, what is this?'

'My dear,' said the Rector, looking at the paper which he held with one hand, whilst he combed out his whiskers with the other, 'it is just as I said; there was no doubt about it. Lambert had been married to—to—her.'

'He never was.'

'Of course, it is most dreadful to think it, and if I had had the very smallest suspicion——'

'Papa, never mind your suspicions, small or big. Read out that paper. Is it what Mr. Physic hinted about—a will that cast abominable reflections on me?'

'It is, my dear Jane, a will—— Excuse me till I look it over.'

'Well, look it over then, and when you have done that, pass it on to me.'

The Rector, with a face very blank and combing vigorously with one hand, read the will. It was not long, and could be run through in half a minute.

'Well, papa?'

'Well, my dear, it is as I said. I really don't know what to say. We shall have to come to some arrangement with Percival. The thing must not be talked about. I would not for a thousand pounds that it should get out that you had not been properly married.'

'I was properly married. You married me yourself.'

'Yes, dear, but then the first wife was alive.'

'She was not alive.'

'My dear, she really was. Here she is now—Percival's wife.'

'She never was Lambert's wife.'

'My dear, really you cannot maintain that. I wish, with all my heart, that it could be proved she had been his—his—the other thing, you know—and not his wife. That would have been a great comfort, a great consolation. But, you see, what with the register——'

'That was a forgery.'

'And with this will, signed by Lambert himself, there can be no doubt about it, no doubt whatever. He calls you by your maiden name, Jane Pamphlet, otherwise known as Jane Curgenven. It is very shocking, and to happen in my family it is almost sacrilege; and it will, should it become public, materially interfere with my advancement as well as my ministerial influence and efficacy. How can I, you see, Jane, reprimand in cases, unfortunate cases——'

'Now, never mind all that, papa. Do you mean to tell me you believe this abominable paper to be a genuine document?'

'Of course it is. There is Lambert's signature—I know it very well—and it was witnessed by old Roger Morideg and James Pike. The paper is perfectly genuine. There, also, is Lambert's seal with the Curgenven arms.'

'Let me see it.' Jane snatched the will from her father, and ran her eye hastily over it.

'Good gracious! Oh, Jane! Oh, goodness! My dear Jane!' Suddenly the Rector whirled about on his heels and faced a landscape in oils hanging on the wall. 'This is certainly by Jeffrey. I know his style—these pale cobalt blues and creamy shadows,

and his foregrounds always weak. I could swear to that tree—so blotchy, and no particularisation about the rocks in front. Yes, certainly by Jeffrey.'

Then in came Percival.

'Will you both come up to Theresa's room?' he asked. 'I've packed off that little snob, sent him with Justin to look at the stables. Now then, come along, and bring the will with you.'

'The will!' gasped the Rector. 'Ahem! Percival, I've been studying this landscape. It is by Jeffrey, is it not?'

'The will!' said Jane, in defiant tone. 'There is no will.'

'Lambert's will I left with you.'

'That!' sniffed Jane—'that insolent document! It was a fabrication by Physic.'

'Never mind, I must have it.'

'You can't. *I've eaten it.*'

'Eaten it!'

'Every shred, every letter, and the sealing-wax as well.'

CHAPTER LIV.

ONCE MORE 'INVENI PORTUM.'

PERCIVAL introduced the Rector and his daughter into Theresa's room. Jane was startled and shocked at the change that had taken place in the wife of the Squire of Curgenven, and with a qualm at her heart she regretted certain bitter feelings she had of late yielded to and harsh words she had expressed. The greenish hue about the mouth, the wax-like whiteness, told a tale that could not be misunderstood. Theresa's eyes seemed extraordinarily large and dark, but they lacked the lustre usual in them.

The Rector was the first to approach her and hold out his hand. Theresa, however, did not take it.

'I will not,' she said, in a low tone. 'I would have you first know what I have to say. You are not aware to whom you offer your hand. If, after what you have heard, you care to give it me, I will take it with gratitude. I have been engaged—'

She pointed to the little table at her side, where she had been writing; a sheet of paper was thickly covered with characters.

'It is not now I have done it. I saw it must come. I have written a little one day—or night, then a little more. It is done

now, all but my signature, and that I wish to add whilst you are here, that you may know what I have to confess.'

'To confess!' said the Rector, with a quiver in his voice. 'I'm not a party man. I particularly object to anything that may be said to savour, to—to wear an aspect—to——'

'But really, papa,' said Jane, in a hard voice, 'really, papa, there is nothing to alarm you in this. It is a written confession, I understand, she wishes to have witnessed.' In an undertone she said, 'Papa, do be sensible. It is all coming out now about that affair with Lambert. I knew it would.'

'My dear, it is an affair I wish to hear nothing about. It cannot be wholesome. I never allow myself to hear of anything that might not come out of or go into *Peep of Day*, or *The Dairyman's Daughter*, or any other very good suitable for children and bedridden old women.'

'Papa, you really must. It is to save my reputation.'

'But—but—if people talk, *my* reputation will suffer.'

'Papa, I insist.'

'My dear, if it must be! Oh, I wish I had never come here!' Combing his whiskers with both hands, he stepped slowly toward Theresa, and said resignedly:

'Well, what is it, then, my dear Mrs. Curgenven?'

'Mrs. Percival,' was the correction thrown in by Jane.

'I feel,' said Theresa, slowly, as a faint colour came to her cheeks in two spots, 'I feel that the time has come when it is my duty to tell all I know.'

'My dear T——,' Percival was at her side, 'can you not put this off to some later period? You really are not strong enough to bear anything that may excite you. Tonks said you were to be kept quiet; I was to amuse you, but not worry you.'

'It would worry me, Percy, if I were not allowed to speak. I have felt convinced for some little time that all efforts to conceal the truth were in vain. That faithful, devoted girl, Esther, has done what she could.'

'That has nothing in the world to do with it,' said Jane bluntly. Theresa turned and looked at her.

'How, nothing?'

'Nothing with that affair of Lambert.'

'I do not understand you. Esther knows all about the death of Mr. Physic.'

'We know that very well,' said Jane; 'and now I am glad to

hear she has been arrested. High time! In our nineteenth century—to give the police the slip! It was preposterous. They did not half look for her.'

'I hear that she is under arrest, and charged with the murder of Mr. Physic,' said Theresa.

'Yes, it is so.'

'She was not guilty. She had nothing to do with it. She held his horse at a distance, that is all.'

'But how can you tell, T——?' said Percival. 'My dear, what is the meaning of this? If Esther be innocent, of course, she will be discharged. You need not fret yourself about her.'

'She must be discharged. She had no hand in it whatever. She drew suspicion to herself to save me.'

'You, T——?'

'Yes. I had done her a little kindness. She is a warm-hearted, grateful creature; and to draw away suspicion from me——'

'But, my dear T——, suspicion could not possibly attach to you! You were ill at home, confined to your room.'

'I was there—for all that; I was there, on the moor at Tolmenna.'

'It is not possible!'

'It is true. I took the pistol from the Bungalow, I——'

'Stay, stay!' cried the Rector; 'I will hear no more. This is most dreadful. I would not for the world! There would be so much talk. It—it might interfere——' He ran to the window, seized the curtain and wrapped it round his head, muffing eyes and ears. Through the folds could be heard a mutter of words, but whether these were 'advancement' or 'ministerial efficacy' could not be distinguished.

Jane Curgenven went after her father.

'Papa, be reasonable. Do pay attention. You must come out of that.' She endeavoured to unwrap his head, but the more she strove to release him the further he wound himself up, till his head resembled a vast cocoon of a silkworm.

Finding her efforts unavailing, and unwilling to lose a word of what was being said by Theresa, she turned back to the chair of the sick woman. Theresa looked round with a face full of distress and plea for mercy.

'I shot him!' she said.

A dead silence ensued. Percival and Jane were too much

astonished to speak. Neither quite believed that Theresa was in her senses. They thought that she was labouring under an hallucination.

'I knew that he had that will. I did not wish my dear, dear husband to be thrown out of Curgenven to struggle with the world for a livelihood. For myself, I could not face the prospect. I was weary, weary to death of the voyage against contrary winds; beaten, battered by storm. I had not the strength, not the self-confidence, not the courage. I—I could not, no, I could not go back to what had been. Alone it would have been bad, but with Percival worse. Mr. Physic offered to sell me the will for the family jewels.'

'Not those diamonds of Lady Margaret's?' gasped Jane.

'The family jewels,' repeated Theresa. 'I could not give them up, and yet I could not let him keep the will. I tried to frighten him. I can't tell you all—it is written here. I have put it in this paper at length. But I solemnly assure you I did not know the pistol was loaded; I thought merely to threaten Mr. Physic. You, Mr. Pamphlet, advised me——' She looked round. 'Where is the Rector?'

'Never mind, he can't hear,' said Jane; 'that is to say, he doesn't choose to hear.'

'I thought it was the last blast of the storm, and then I would be at peace. I was weary—I wanted rest. I—I never meant it—I——'

'Theresa, dear, do not distress yourself,' said Percival, going to her. She was sinking in her chair. The slight colour had gone out of her cheeks. She was death-like in her whiteness.

'Will you take my hand, Percy? there is blood on it. But I never, never meant to kill him. It was rest from care and battle that I wanted. I had fought and toiled all my life. Everyone was against me; no, not everyone, you loved me.'

Percival seated himself on the elbow of her chair, put one arm round her to hold her up, and clasped her hand.

She was silent for some while, breathing heavily, and gathering her failing, scattered senses.

'Percy, where is the table?'

'Here, love.'

'I want to sign it all.'

'I pray you be calm, and do not concern yourself about it.'

'I must do it. Esther is in prison.'

'No, not in prison, dear.'

'She is very ill, and the police have taken her. Give me the pen—where is it?'

She turned in her chair and groped for the paper and pen; her sight was failing.

'Have you dipped it? Hold me, Percy; hold me up whilst I write.'

She took the pen and bowed her head over the paper on which she had written the story of what she had done.

Jane drew near and watched eagerly.

Theresa was writing laboriously; she seemed not to be able to see the letters she was forming. Then her head sank upon the table, and she lay heavily on Percival's arm.

'Oh, Jane,' gasped he, 'she has fainted!'

'She is dead!' said Jane, and drew the paper from under the white face, and looked for the signature. It was not there. In straggling characters the words were written, and still were wet: '*Inveni portum.*'

CHAPTER LV.

THE RIGHT MEN IN THE RIGHT PLACES.

'Of all the owls that inhabit the British Isles,' said Justinian, 'commend me for sheer owliness to the police force and the magistracy—present company excepted,' he conceded, waving his hand towards his father. 'I may add, a British coroner and jury. In the first place, these latter found that old Physic had been shot by Esther, and now these former have proved that she did nothing of the sort. If they had stopped there, it would have been well—but they have gone on to declare that he shot himself.'

'Why, Justin, old fellow, that was your own theory.'

Justinian was a little staggered. It had been his theory, and he had proclaimed the police owls for not adopting his view. However, he speedily recovered his self-satisfaction and balance, and said, 'Yes, till I knew better or worse, as you like to take it. It was not my profession or duty to investigate the matter, and on a superficial acquaintance with it I came to that conclusion which a sound intelligence would arrive at on such data; but when I began to go into the matter, then I speedily found it wouldn't wash. I gave my evidence sharp and to the point—not a word too much. Just what I was asked and no more. Had I observed the pistol hanging in the rack an hour before the fatal affair? I

had. What opportunity had I for arriving at this conviction? The best: I had gone into the Bungalow to fetch my gun. Where had I gone with my gun? To Cartuthers, to Sir Sampson's. He had a shooting party—only rabbits. Anything more? "Nothing more, thank you," from the bench. So I left the box. Aunt Jane went through her performance, I must say, though I don't like her, well. She had jumped to conclusions on wrong premisses, no doubt about it. She had jumped to conclusions hastily, and it was all her doing that the coroner found what he did, or he and the jury, rubbing their stupid noddles together. She got out of it very well. She said just what was wanted, and no more. She told how Esther had come bouncing down on her with the pistol, and had said that with it Physic had been shot. At once, as she admitted, she had rushed to the conclusion that Esther had done the deed; she now admitted that the conclusion was hardly justified. Esther had not exactly said she had done the deed, but that the pistol had done it, a statement quite compatible with the theory that he had shot himself.'

'And then, I suppose, the lodge-keeper was put in the box?'

'No, dad, that fellow Pike next, and he made mental prancings and buck-jumping. He involved himself in all kinds of contradictions, and the bench—Sir Sampson was chairman—had to warn him. I don't think he meant any harm, but that he was intellectually incapable of giving a straight answer. There you have the difference between culture and absence of culture.' Whereas I——'

'Yet you deceived the bench just as much as he.'

'I, gov.? Not I. I said what was true—true down to the ground. Had they asked me whether my stepmother had had any finger in the matter, I should have been bound to say what I knew; I could not tell a lie even to save the reputation of the Curgenven family. But not a trace of a suspicion entered their obfuscated noddles that she was out that day, and had met Physic at Tolmenna. Unasked I was not going to tell them—not I. The Curgenven name must not be stained; besides, it was of no use now the dear mother is no more. I would spare her memory as I would save our name. Everything came out pat and to the point. The lodge-keeper had seen Physic ride his cob in at the gates. The butler had answered the door when he came to inquire how Mrs. Curgenven was. He told the butler it had reached him that she had had a fit; Turbot did not send up to inquire, but

answered off-hand, that his lady was slightly better, but confined to her room. Then the keeper saw him near the Bungalow. The next thing heard of him was that he was shot at Tolmenna. He was going to open a mine there, you know. Well, dad, it came out before the bench that old Physic's affairs were in a very bad state, and that there was going to be an inquiry into the way in which he had managed the Camden property. It seems probable that this frightened him. He dared not await exposure. Since his death, frauds have been detected. Then Esther must have seen him shoot himself; she was awfully droll at the petty sessions. There was no getting a word out of her. That is to say, she kept on repeating, "I'll die game, I sha'n't speak nothing," and she kept her word. Sir Sampson, and the rest of the bench, thought she was an idiot or a savage, and gave her up in despair. But they did not in the least believe, after the evidence, that she had shot Physic, and so they discharged her.'

'How is the poor girl?'

'She is better. She has been awfully ill, but she is picking up now. The Tregaskis family, brother and sister, have been good to her, and keep her with them till she is quite recovered; but they say she is impatient to be back on the moors again.'

'Justinian, old boy, there is a matter I want to talk over with you, but I haven't had the heart since my dear T——'s death.'

'Governor, at the petty sessions the bench, I believe, passed a resolution of condolence with you on your loss.'

'That's all very fine, but why did not their wives come and call on T——? It was the doing of that Jane, I am convinced. I do not know what Jane said, or left unsaid, but she set all the women against her. Dear T—— felt it—felt it keenly; it half broke her heart, I am sure of it. Now you'll see—after about six months they'll come calling, or making their husbands come to visit me. I'm disengaged now, and may be captured. In vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird; and not one of those women who turned up their noses at my T—— shall set foot in this house if I can help it. That's my last word. Justin, I give you full leave to shoot me if I go from it. No, put me in an asylum, I shall be fit for that if I so far forget what is due to her dear and honoured memory. Justin, old chap, it has been my lot to have at my side two of the best of women, and both Bohemians, as I suppose society would label them. Admirable women both; 'pon my word, Justin, I was not worthy of either.'

'What is it that you wanted to consult me about?' asked Justinian.

'Oh, I forgot! It is this, boy. I gave you a sort of a rough idea of how matters stood about the property. I'm hanged if I think I have any right to be here, and yet what am I to do? Jane will have none of it. I told you the reason. Besides, she has eaten the will. How she got it down I can't think. And there was a seal too, the Curgenven arms. But a woman of that sort will do anything—has the stomach of an ostrich and the conscience of a giraffe. What is to be done? I don't feel that in honour I ought to be here—and yet legally I am squire—that is, without the eaten will. Really, the place belongs to Alice, or will belong to her when she is of age. I can act as trustee. I believe old Lambert did want me and Jane to be the trustees, but then, when Alice is of age, I shall be bound in honour, I feel, to clear out and make way for her, and of course she will be snapped up by some young fellow, and I must find some other berth.'

'Oh! you need not concern yourself, governor. I am glad you have consulted me, and I happen to be the person—the only person—who could put you to rights. I am going to marry Alice.'

'You, Justin!'

'Why not? It is all settled between us. I shall be of age next year, and Alice eighteen, so we can be married right off then. You can have the Bungalow fitted up for yourself, or stay here with us—just as you like. You will be most heartily welcome. Always a knife and fork for you, gov.'

'Upon my word——'

'That settles every difficulty.'

'Upon my word, I'll have you on the Commission as soon as ever you are of age. By George! you'll be a model J.P., and Chairman of Board of Guardians, and all that sort of thing. The square man in the square hole at last.'

'Papa, really I cannot conceive how you could do it?'

'Do what, my love?'

'Preach a funeral sermon on that woman.'

'My dear, I could not help myself. She was squiress, and if I had not done so, people would have talked.'

'I could not have done it.'

'I dare say not, my dear. But, Jane, you are not in my place, have not my responsibilities. I have been ordained, and set apart

for the special office and function of giving no offence to any man, that the ministry be not blamed, and I flatter myself that I do my duty. I give offence to none. Besides, in the matter of the funeral sermon, I dealt in generalities.'

'The text itself was outrageous. I turned white and red.'

'The text was perfectly harmless. "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies." It was a question. If that were turned into Latin, one would be in difficulties. For if a *num* were employed, it would at once imply that no such person was to be found. Happily our language is sufficiently vague to allow of leaving the question open.'

'But it *did* imply that she was a virtuous woman, and that is precisely what you know she was not.'

'I know nothing. Whatever may have been said whilst my head was wrapped up in the curtain, I, of course, cannot tell. Knowing nothing, I could use that text; and even if I had known anything against her, by throwing the stress of my voice on *can* and *virtuous*, I could have implied, had I chosen, that she was not all she might have been. But I did not choose—I could not offend Percival. And Justinian is just as peppery and ready to fire up at a word of disparagement of his stepmother as is Percival.'

'If I had known you were going to preach that sermon, I would not have gone to church. How about a monument in the Curgenven aisle? You will not allow that?'

'I cannot refuse.'

'Then charge treble fees.'

'Nor can I do that legally.'

'Then insist on seeing the inscription. And, for mercy's sake, have no fibs on that; and no texts of Scripture exalting the deceased into being a saint. That, at least, you can legally prevent.'

'Percival has been to me already about the monument, and has written out what he thinks a suitable inscription. Here it is.'

Jane Curgenven ran her eyes over the paper her father presented to her.

'Well—the dearly beloved wife—I suppose he did care for her. There are queer tastes in the world. He has the grace not to say of whom she was the daughter, for I suppose he knew no more than anyone else. And for text, what is that? It is Latin.'

'Yes, *Inveni portum*: I have found harbour.'

Jane returned the paper. 'It will do; but, papa, how could you text the text you did with its allusion to the jewels?'

'My dear, why not?'

'The jewels, papa; why, surely you have not forgotten? The Curgenven jewels lost—made away with. It is monstrous. She had some cock-and-bull story to account for their disappearance, no doubt. The fact is, the jewels are gone—made away with. Were they pawned? Were they sold? Who pocketed the money? You may depend upon it there is some ugly story behind the disappearance of the jewels. Lady Margaret Curgenven's diamonds gone! It is too horrible. I wish to goodness now I had not left them at the house. I thought I was in conscience bound to do so, and I did it. Now they are all gone, and you talked of jewels in connection with her and her virtue in church. Really, papa, there is a limit to charity.'

'My dear, I made no definite statement. I never do, I envelop all I say in a cloud of generalities, or take the edge off everything that appears to be a definite statement by qualifications with "but" and "if." I trust that no one can say that I have ever given anyone anything that he could lay hold of. And—but here come the letters.'

The Rev. Mr. Pamphlet opened the first.

'My dear, here is my reward. An archdeaconry and canonry. I really do think I have deserved them, and that I shall be the round man in the round hole.'

CHAPTER LVI.

'CIVILISATION BE BLOWED.'

THE bells were pealing. A twelvemonth was past, and Justinian was married to Alice.

The rectory was crowded with friends and acquaintances. To attend at breakfast the butler Turbot and a footman had been brought from the Hall. The Venerable the Archdeacon strutted about in gaiters and corded hat, bowing, smiling, saying agreeable things to everyone. He had hopes that if he remained absolutely colourless, the way was open to him to become a bishop.

'Well, Percival, a proud day for you, to see your son and heir married. How are you? You don't look over cheerful.'

Hang it, Archdeacon, no! I can't forget T——. It would have pleased her.'

'You must not look back. By the way, you'll be gratified to hear that Mrs. Jordan has joined the Church. Since I have given her my washing, she has left the Particular Baptists, and is now regular in her attendance on my ministrations.'

'I say, my dear Archdeacon, what is the tale I hear about Tregaskis?'

'I really cannot inform you. The man has not attended my humble ministrations for some time, and I hear is leaving or being turned out of the police force. I have visited him, and I regret to say that I found him in a condition of demoralisation very painful to contemplate. Demoralisation is, perhaps, too strong a term, but what I mean is resentment against—recalcitration against everything that I and Jane and all right-thinking people cherish. I mean our nineteenth-century civilisation, that network of silk that enfolds and, perhaps—well, perhaps embarrasses us, but it is for our good. I said something to him on the advantages of civilisation, and his response was neither elegant nor grammatical. He said civilisation be—I cannot complete the sentence. To repeat what is neither elegant nor grammatical might interfere with my pros—I mean my archidiaconal weight. It was something that is done to soap-bubbles. Who is that? What is that noise, Turbot?'

'Beg pardon, Mr. Archdeacon, there's Esther Morideg has come in at the front door, right in among the gentlefolks, and never rung nor nothing. She says that she wants—Mr. Archdeacon—to see Miss Alice. I beg pardon—meaning Mrs. Curgenven of Curgenven.'

'What is that? What is that?' exclaimed Jane, who was near; then in her energetic, determined manner she rushed into the hall, and there found Esther making her way through the guests, in spite of the remonstrances of John Thomas, the footman.

'I reckon I'm as good a friend o' Miss Alice as any o' these fine folk here,' said the girl. 'Where be she? I want to speak w' her, and I've gotten sum'ut for her too.'

'Esther, what's the meaning of this?' exclaimed Mrs. Jane Curgenven. 'This is intolerable. In at the front door! If you want anything, go to the back. But you are not wanted. This is no place for you, and I can't have you bothering the servants either—they are all engaged.'

'You'r'n't going to turn me out o' this as you turned me out o' the park at the school treat!' said Esther, defiantly. 'I be growed big since then.' She tossed her shoulders. 'I know this, I wi'nt go. I wi'n't go till I ha' seed Miss Alice. Her and I be fast friends, and I ha' gotten sum'ut for her.'

'What is that? Why, goodness——' Jane tried to snatch a box from under Esther's arm. 'That's the Curgenven jewel case. Esther! what right have you to that? Where did you get that?'

'Where I got'n, and how I got'n, is naught to you. I'm bringing it for Miss Alice.'

'Give it to me at once, I insist. That box has been lost for a twelvemonth—it was made away with. You stole it. I'll have you summonsed. Give it up to me instantly.'

'I wi'n't,' said Esther, defiantly. 'Why should I? I'll give it, I reckon, to Miss Alice—her's the true Mrs. Curgenven of Curgenven now. The butler chap said so. I reckon you've no more to do wi' it than he has. I'll gie it to the proper Mrs. Curgenven of Curgenven, and none other.'

At that moment Alice, in her travelling dress, descended the stairs. In a moment she saw Esther, and came to her with both hands extended. 'My dear Esther! I am so delighted. You, too, have come to wish me happiness. That was the only thing wanting to make me quite happy. Come along with me upstairs, and I will show you all the pretty things that kind friends have given me.'

She led Esther away out of the throng to her room.

'Now, Esther,' she said, 'sit down and tell me all about yourself. You are quite well again now?'

'Yes, I reckon I'm just as I was. And see here, Miss Alice, I've brought you all the Curgenven diamonds and pearls, and other beauties. They was lost, but I had 'em. And yet I'd clean forgot all about 'em. You know I was cruel bad wi' fever, and then I dun' know I niver gave a thought to 'em, till I heard as you was a goin' to be married, and then all to once they jumped into my head. I had 'em all under a floor-stone to Tolmenna. I reckon there ain't one lost. No one niver has touched 'em since I put 'em there. There, that's brave, on your weddin' day I can give you a better present than all them beautiful things the grand folk ha' given you.'

'And you wish me all happiness, dear Esther.'

'Ees, I reckon I do. It's I, too, as made it all come about.'

Didn't I put your hands together through the hole at Tolmenna? Well, folks as ha' done that, they're sure joined more nor any parson or registrar can make 'em. That be how Tregaskis and I is goin' to be married.'

'Esther! Tregaskis going to marry you? The constable!'

'No—I reckon it's I be going to marry Tregaskis. But he's no constable no more, soas!'

'What, has he left the force?'

'I'll just tell 'ee all about it,' said Esther, seating herself. 'Tregaskis be cruel sweet on me; he hev' took a fancy to I ever sin' I were i' fever i' his sister's and his house. I can't blame him. He ain't a bad 'un now he's seed the error o' his ways, and found liberty.'

'What do you mean, Esther?' Alice had some little acquaintance with the quaint revivalist cant that pervades all the working classes in Cornwall, but she did not see how this exactly applied to the constable. 'Surely Mr. Tregaskis has always been a most exemplary man?'

'He's been terrible under the law, as folks say,' answered Esther. 'But I'm right glad to say now, Miss Alice, he's found liberty.'

'But, my dear Esther, I do not understand you.'

'It's easy though,' said the moor girl. 'When Tregaskis told the sergeant he were going to be married to I, then they kicked up such a bobby. They said it would bring disgrace on the force, and they—that's the sergeant and the superintendent—wouldn't have it, and they'd have Tregaskis moved off somewhere to the hinder end o' Cornwall. Well, Tregaskis wouldn't stan' this, and so it come about that it was he must go out o' the force, or do without I; and nat'rally he couldn't do that, so he's no more a perleceman, and under the law. And he says he's cruel glad, and feels lighter and easier already; it's like a burden lifted off his heart. He had to be always on duty, and walkin' the rounds night and day, meetin' other perlece, and all for no good at all. And then he was that tight squedged up i' his uniform, and his poor head boxed up i' a sort of helmet. It were the bondage of Egypt. But he's found liberty now, and is out o' it all.'

'But what is Tregaskis going to do?'

'Nothing, that's just it,' answered Esther, cheerily. 'Granfer, and he, and I be a goin' to build up Tolmenna once more. It seems old lawyer Physic hadn't no proper title to the land, or sum'ut's gone wrong, and I reckon nobody knows exactly whose it is,

or p'raps it be gone back to the lord o' the manor. Anyhow, we's goin' to tumble the old place together again; us can do it in a couple o' days.'

'Yes, that is all very well; but for a livelihood?'

'Us don't want a terrible deal on the moor—no more nor does long cripples (snakes), or horniwinks (peewits). But it'll make gran'mother easy i' her mind; you know her couldn't die i' peace wi'out giving up her secret to somebody, and her 'll give it to Tregaskis, and I reckon he'll pick up a shilling or so in charmin' warts, and tellin' fortunes, and strikin' king's evil, and blessin' wounds, and staunchin' blood and so.'

'But, Esther, this is a wonderful change in Mr. Tregaskis—a policeman to become a White witch.'

'Ees, I reckon it be,' said Esther, in a tone of triumph. 'But he sez, sez he, wi' a crow like a cock, "Civilisation be blowed." He be a changed creature—that he be, I do assure you, miss; you'd say so, if you see'd him now.'

'Why, what is he about now?'

'He's a tearin' up o' his clothes, his uniform, you know, and he's chuckin' all the buttons with the crown on 'em into Trewortha marsh, where a twelvemonth ago he runned arter me, and tumbled in, up to his chin, i' the bog water.' Esther went off into a fit of laughter. 'Bless'y, Miss Alice, us be goin' to have a figgy (plum) puddin' to our weddin', and us be a goin' to bile 'n i' his helmet. The young squire said I was to tak' what sticks I liked out o' the Curgenven woods, and we'll bile our puddin' on them sticks and a few clots o' turf. 'Twill be brave.'

'The carriage is at the door,' said the servant, after knocking.

'Now really, Esther, I must go, Good-bye, give me a kiss.'

'You'll come and see me and Tregaskis, won't you?' pleaded the wild girl.

'Dear Esther, yes, but only on one condition—that you are married in church. Passing the hands through the hole in the stone may satisfy you and the ex-constable, but not me. Promise me that.'

'Very well, I'll do that just to oblige you,' said Esther, resignedly, 'but it's terrible like going under the law again. I'll do it. I'll tell'y somethin' more as 'll make'y laugh. Rainy days, and when us has got nothin' to do, Tregaskis and me 'll knock each other about the heads wi' his truncheon, just for exercise, and to amuse granfer and gran'mother.'

'I really must go,' said Alice, and descended the stairs, attended by Esther.

'What, you still here!' exclaimed Jane. 'I thought I had ordered you out of this house. Really, Alice, you must not encourage this girl.'

'Now you leave she alone,' said Esther, 'it's no concern of yourn. And I tell'y I'll walk wi' my young man about i' the park, and nobody shall say "Get out" now. You ar'n't nothin'. Her's Mrs. Curgenven of Curgenven.'

The carriage drove away, the slipper was thrown, rice was showered. The Archdeacon and Jane Curgenven stood in the drive looking after the carriage.

Jane uttered a little groan. 'I never, never thought *that*, or I never would have consented.'

'What, love?'

'That my child, that chit, should take precedence over me, and be Mrs. Curgenven of Curgenven.'

THE END.

IN THE NEW FOREST.

It is no doubt owing to the strictness with which game laws have been enforced that a sanctuary is provided for so many of our creatures that would otherwise be ruthlessly shot at by those men—butchers we might call them—who go out from our towns for to kill and destroy something or other, they reck little what. If game should ever come to be left to itself, or to the tender mercies of the masses, it would be a sorry day for all animated nature in our land. Landowners as well as gamekeepers are certainly becoming actuated more and more by enlightened views in respect of those creatures that have so long been classed as vermin. In the New Forest of late, since the keepers have been debarred from shooting all wild things—sparrow-hawks excepted—the birds and beasts have multiplied greatly.

To watch wild life, furred or feathered, one must of course be on foot, alone, and have a good field-glass in hand. For general purposes, however, I found a low pony carriage—which I hired at Mudeford—a most convenient vehicle for moving about in the direction of the forest. This is worthy of mention on account of its owner and driver, who seemed to have relatives scattered all over the district, with whom he 'passed the time of day' very frequently during a morning's drive. His reminiscences, suggested at various points, were very interesting to one like myself who likes to study humans as well as birds and animals. The church he attended as a boy he showed me with much pride. Hand in hand, and two by two, he said, the school children went on Sunday; the boys first, in smock-frocks, white trousers, and straw hats, and the girls behind, in straw bonnets, white tippets, and print frocks; these being always an annual present from the rector or vicar. And there on Sunday the choir is still composed of boys and girls, the latter dressed alike in cottage bonnets and white tippets.

My friend had been in the police force in his younger days, and was for some time in Charles Kingsley's parish. This was in the times of the Chartist troubles, and the vicar of the adjoining parish having been mysteriously murdered, the act was ascribed to these agitators. A watch was therefore appointed at the various

vicarages round, and it fell to our friend to be stationed at that of Charles Kingsley. The old man dwelt with much pleasure on the kind thoughtfulness of that Broad Churchman and muscular Christian in seeing that he always got a good supper and breakfast, saying that the vicar used himself to rouse up the cook extra early so that he might not have to leave without the latter. After all, it was found that the Chartists were innocent in the matter; but the oddest part of the business, as the man said, was that the widow afterwards married the detective, a smart fellow who had been sent down from London to scent out the affair.

From Christchurch, as well as from Mudeford, one enters the New Forest by Hinton Admiral, passing the seat of Sir George Meyrick, whose fine estate reaches the confines of the New Forest at Forest Lodge. A wide expanse of heath and gorse, which is now one blaze of golden yellow, and later on will be purple with heather, stretches far away on the left to Burley and Bury Wood, which owes its name to the fact of its having been the burial-place of the soldiers slain in the seventh battle of King Arthur.

There is a certain beauty of wildness and desolation still present about this region. The trees, which are of great age, have many of them attained a majestic growth. The New Forest has a peculiar charm of its own, one that consists not so much in the grandeur of individual trees, but in the masses of wood, the long solemn aisles of trees, the groups of sombre yews contrasted with neighbouring whitethorn, the sylvan glades, purple-clad hills, and long stretches of heather and gorse. And here one finds oneself in company with Dame Nature in her best and most unspoiled aspects; all is still so little changed, if, indeed, changed at all, since the times when the wolf and the wild boar ranged here. He 'rattles like a boar in a holme (or holly) bush' is still a familiar saying with the forest dwellers. The turf is still cut by the squatter, in order to cure his bacon by its smoke; the charcoal burner continues to follow his avocation as in the time of the Red King. A 'shade' still means an *open* piece of ground or a pool; generally it is on the top of a hill. When they say the cattle come 'to shade' they mean they seek a spot where they are open to the cooling influences of water and breeze. The boys in their round smock-frocks are even yet bidden to 'lout to their betters.'

And through their winding courses the same streams flow as of old, licking out deep pools by the gnarled roots of oak and beech, washing over shallows of rolled and rounded pebbles; the lily and

iris there still gladdening the eye, milkwort waving blue heads, wood-sorrel lifting its delicately veined cups, and wood-anemones hanging their fair heads, as they have done for centuries. You might travel far and wide and not find such another combination of all that is lovely and also grand in scenery.

Some of the oaks in Boldrewood are very large; one that is twenty-four feet in girth is covered with a lichen—which, commonly known as the 'lungs of oak,' is a common local remedy for consumption. Another supposed cure for the same disease is to kill a jay, and calcine it by placing it in the embers of a peat fire. At stated times of the year this is mixed with water and drunk by the patient.

Hares' brains are supposed still to be a useful tonic for children that have come into the world before their time. Children afflicted with fits are still passed through cloven openings in ash trees. A certain lichen again is used in a lotion for strengthening weak eyes; whilst the fat of the hedgehog is used to lubricate stiff joints. Bread baked on Good Friday, the forest folks believe, will keep good for seven years, and it will also cure certain complaints. The seventh son of a seventh son is supposed to be endowed with wonderful gifts in performing cures. This last idea is not peculiar to the New Foresters; in the midland counties it has a strong hold on the country folks. About the stoppage of blood flowing, from wounds or ruptured blood-vessels especially, there are some very peculiar beliefs in some parts, one being that the secret can only be transmitted by a man to a woman, and again by a woman to a man.

There is an amusing proverb in use here about upstarts: 'A dog is made fat in two meals.' A curious idea is prevalent in the forest about the death's-head moth; they believe firmly that this insect was never seen until after the execution of Charles the First.

There is scarcely a village or hamlet in the New Forest but has its pixy field or mead, or its pixy's cave. That mischievous spirit, which is known under the name of 'Laurence,' still obtains possession of those whom 'the gods wish to ruin.' 'Laurence has got on him,' they say of one who is lazy. A tricky fairy, the forest folk believe to this day, tempts their rough native ponies to stray. Also, they say that he lives in bogs, into which he entices the unwary. 'Colt pixies' such as he are termed; only the first-born may consider themselves to be free from his spell. The caterpillar is known, as in the days of the first translation of the

Bible into English, as the 'palmerworm.' A woodlander talks of feeling lear-like when he is hungry, using a corruption of the word 'learned,' old English for emptiness, which reminds one of the German 'leer.' But one might fill pages with examples showing how much Nature, in 'humans' as well as in wild life, has been allowed to remain as she was so many generations ago. There is a potent charm about this old-world state of things which seizes on one, and seems for a time to fill one who enters the forest precincts with a sense of rest that is soothing to both heart and brain.

The poor little shrew is considered to be a creature of ill-omen by the peasants here; yet the shrews are supposed to die instantly if they attempt to cross a road where man has been, just as a witch is judged to be incapable of crossing running water. The bite of a female shrew in young is considered most dangerous, and even if she but runs over the limb of a horse or a cow, it will, they say, cause paralysis. If this catastrophe befall a beast, the forest farmer as soon as possible drags the afflicted animal through a loop of bramble—that is, a long spray that has rooted itself, or been rooted so intentionally, at both ends. This is often done by the end of a trailing branch being trodden into the ground by the hoofs of passing cattle. Another remedy is to rub the parts affected with the branches of a shrew-ash, that is an ash-tree which has been, in many cases, planted purposely near the farmstead, into which, when the trunk is large enough, a hole is bored with an auger, and then the poor little live mouse, or shrew, is thrust into this with many senseless incantations. The hole is plugged up, and the shrew thus buried alive.

The names of the forest villages are almost unchanged, and the natives of these are many of them descendants of Cerdic, who fought at Burley about the year 495 A.D. In that notable battle five battalions were slain between sunrise and sunset. And these people, as I have said, use old English words such as are now never heard elsewhere.

The raven still breeds here, as he did in ages past, although there are not so many pairs of them about as the many raven-trees testify to; yet he is, far from rare. Mr. Hart, of Christchurch, who has from time to time kept many of the local birds as pets for a period, and then let them go free again, had once a tame raven which, after he had restored it to its native forest, used to meet him when it heard his familiar call, and accompany him and his gun, acting as a retriever for him.

The heron, which has been long at home in Vinney Ridge, is still here—a bird so noble and picturesque-looking as she sails quietly through the air, or when resting on her nest, where she now and again raises her head in alarm as some bird of prey passes in its flight overhead, or that ominous sound of the raven's hoarse croak reaches her ear.

On some branch the common buzzard has built its nest, which is scarcely left whilst you walk underneath. The bird feeds on carrion, small birds, mice, and frogs, varied by an occasional rabbit. When well fed, a buzzard will sit for hours motionless on some commanding position from which he could readily see any approaching danger. Since so high a price has been offered for the eggs of this bird, as well as for those of the honey-buzzard, his nest, open to view as it is, suffers much when the bark-strippers are at work, and fewer of the young are reared in the New Forest than formerly.

In many an old ivy-covered ruin of some once stately tree you may see the tawny owl, a bird by popular prejudice inseparably connected with the night and doubtful deeds, yet one that is really so little annoyed by the sunlight that you will usually find him sitting on the sunny side of the tree, with his body close up against its trunk. On your approach he will draw himself up erect, and still more closely to the tree, so that his colouring harmonises with the tones of the moss and lichen-covered bark to a degree that renders the bird almost invisible to any but a practised eye. The lichen, by the way, is always found growing on that side of the tree that faces south—a good hint, as some one has suggested, for the guidance of anyone who may lose himself in forest recesses. During March the owls nest, and during that month their weird and uncanny call might be heard in the daytime. During the nights of autumn the hooting is most heard; and many a nocturnal creature, as well as fish, is captured as the bird flies noiselessly through the air. The tawny owl is fond of his bath; you may watch him settle on a shallow, plunging and scattering the water in all directions as he goes through his ablutions. A sorry appearance he makes as he leaves the water for some old tree, on which he quickly dries himself. This species, there is no doubt, mates for life, and each year the same hole is tenanted by a pair. They commence to sit as soon as the first egg is laid, so that young birds and eggs are found in the same nest. These owls are very provident; after satisfying their wants the

birds always store the remains away in their larder. One of these larders a friend examined lately contained five voles, one rat, and three blind-worms.

The long-eared owl prefers shady pine-trees, and he is more gregarious in his habits, nesting in the thick branches of pine or some squirrel-drey. At dusk he issues forth, and then woe to any small mouse that his quick ear may detect moving in the grass. His hooting may be heard by the hour as he sits on some leafless bough.

The yaffingale, yaffle, or green woodpecker is amongst the feathered creatures what the peaceful hero of labour is in his own world, a pick and climbing-hooks being all he asks for. With these he is perfectly content to work for his daily food, and, more than that, he makes the woods ring with his yikeing laugh. On he plods, tapping this tree and that, and by the process of auscultation interrogates sounds, and selects for himself some rotten tree that is populated with insects. At times he is all excitement, crest erect; his tongue, which is furnished with little barbs on the tip, covered with a slimy substance, darts into the wood, and each time it is withdrawn some insect is imprisoned on the tip. The root of the tongue, by a muscular contraction, is slid round behind the ear and into the upper mandible, so that, the tip being withdrawn into the mouth, the insect is received in the throat. The green woodpecker always ascends the tree, and he makes a new nesting-hole each season, the old one being generally taken possession of by some species of tit. Two other woodpeckers frequent the forest, but they are more local—the little and the greater spotted woodpeckers. Unlike their more common relative, the latter of these two species uses some decayed branch for nesting purposes, enlarging a natural cavity till it pleases him.

The wryneck, which takes its name from the singular habit it has of twisting its neck about from side to side—'weet-bird' the country folks call it, on account of its cry—is a very common bird. For hours together in the early morning it can be heard calling, as it sits crosswise on some upper branch of a tree. On another tree a little creature that looks at first sight like a mouse rather than a bird is moving upwards, downwards, and sideways with equally agile motions, searching for insects. After he has found some suitable hole in a branch of a tree—and sometimes a hole in a wall is chosen for the purpose—he builds his nest and blocks up the entrance to it by skilful bird-masonry, using small stones and

clay. Only a small aperture for ingress and egress is left. As the name implies, he is very fond of nuts, and frequents hazel and beech woods, where, after picking from amongst the fallen leaves some nut, he carries it to a lateral branch, and resting the nut between the grooves of the bark, hammers at it until the shell splits and the kernel can be secured.

Jays and magpies are here in goodly numbers, the latter selecting some thorn or holm (holly) bush wherein to build its nest, one that has a thick and tangled mass at the base, as they know that from below, only, danger can come; the nest is so domed above with a canopy of thorns that all intruders are surely excluded from that quarter. Both jays and magpies have suffered much at the hands of keepers, yet the magpie especially renders good service in devouring much small deer that is hurtful to man's interests.

A very common visitor to the gorse districts is the grasshopper warbler. A skulking little bird he is, and only if one is able to get up with the sun is one likely to catch a glimpse of him as he reels out his monotonous song, sitting on the top of some bush.

Skylarks and woodlarks are found in the forest. 'Lulu,' our neighbours across the Continent call the latter bird, a name which is suggestive of its song, which it utters as it ascends from a branch, hovers in the air, and descends again.

The woodcutter at his work is a welcome friend in the most remote parts to the cheery robin. He hastens to greet him in the early morning, and remains near him, enjoying some crumbs from his meal, and hopping about as though he would let the labourer feel that some creature is interested in him and his lonely work in the forest.

Woodcutters' wives, at any rate, do not always appreciate the beauty of their forest homes. I was talking to one of these lately, and expressing my delight in her surroundings. 'I've had enough on it,' she replied, 'eighteen years; 'tis desprit lonesome. Past them ugly trees is the road, but you'll surely lose your way comin' back if ye don't mark crosses with your stick as ye go.' 'Them ugly trees' were great Scotch firs, the red stems glowing in the sunlight. They were too sombre and not clothed enough probably to suit the untrained rustic mind.

Another friend of man, and of God Almighty, according to the well-known saw, is the cutty or wren, which is abundant here. This little troglodyte apparently makes a nest for himself, besides

that for his wife and family; such a one is called a cock's nest, and to it the shrewd little fellow is supposed to retire to spend a quiet night by himself, near enough, however, to his family to supervise them. During the winter the wrens flock to man's dwelling-place, to congregate there in holes, especially in the thatch of cottages. As many as fifteen have been found huddled up in one place on the lee side of a cottage.

Leaving the more wooded districts—where numbers of thrushes and blackbirds are making the woods ring with the swelling cadence of song, and where the rich, wild notes of the nightingale, the notes of sedge- and reed-warblers, the cooing of the ring-dove, the crow of the pheasant, the churr of the churn-owl or night-jar, the distant croak of the corn-crake, all add a charm in their different hours—you pass to the open plains and valleys or bottoms, as they are termed. Around the ponds and through the watercourses innumerable footprints of the snipe can be seen, and the male bird may be heard, as he swoops downwards with half-closed wings, the air vibrating through the feathers causing that curious noise, heard especially towards evening and in the breeding season—'bleating' the rustics term it.

In mock battle the woodcock often disport themselves during the pleasant mild evenings, tilting one another with ruffled plumage; but just now they are more sedate, having in most cases young with them. A mere depression in the ground serves as a nest; the fallen fern leaves around quite hide them from view. They will not leave the nest until you are within a foot or so of it, and then they may rescue a little one from danger by clasping it between the legs and bearing it away to safety. They will, of course, carry their young in this fashion also to water, as the nest is usually on dry moorland, to be out of danger from their commoner foes.

Another, but a more wary bird, nests here—that is the curlew, for, although associated so much with the sea-coast, it is an inland breeder, and resorts to a heathy plain, where the four large eggs are laid under the shelter of some furze bush or tuft of grass. The curlew is ever on the watch for enemies, quickly greeting the intruder with his clear note of ker-lee, a warning cry which is taken notice of by all birds. They feed by the dark peaty pools on insects and their larvæ.

To the same forest ponds the teal will return year after year, nesting generally at some distance from them. When the little

ones are hatched out the parents lead them to the reed-fringed pool. Few sights are prettier than these beautiful little ducks, with the tender solicitude of the old birds for the safety of their young.

Many a fleet of duck can be seen on the ponds and lakes. These also nest amongst the gorse and heather, at times most curious sites being chosen. One Mr. Hart found was on the top of a hayrick; he was not able to see a sight which would have been very interesting, that of the parent bringing the fluffy little birds down from that height of nine feet. The mallards take no part in caring for the young, they keep by themselves in small companies; during the summer the drakes assume a dress similar to that of the ducks, only a little darker.

The blackcock is almost the only bird here belonging to the past. So scarce is he now that only rarely can you catch a glimpse of him, whilst he feeds on the berries of the mountain ash.

There is an indescribable charm about this varied scenery of wood and moor, which perhaps gives more pleasure than any other that I know. The eye delights itself in gazing on the large massive oaks, the tall, shapely beech stems, covered with lichen; the sea of waving bracken or the flowing cotton-grass. Gentle undulations covered with heather are here broken by plains of greenest turf, over which is borne on the breeze the distant neighing of forest cattle, or the sound of the hurried flight of the wood-dove. And we sit and watch the shadows lengthen, and the haze of evening creep on, while the sun sinks beyond yonder Purbeck Hills, after flooding all things with a golden light that fills us with vague, mysterious presentiments of some coming morning of promise.

THE BISHOP'S NOMINEE.

'I do hope he will be a gentleman, my dear,' said the Rector's wife to her sister-in-law, with a look of anxiety.

'Whom do you mean, Jane?' asked Miss Belsize, in her peculiar bass tones.

'The new curate, of course. Have you forgotten? He is coming to dinner to-night.'

'Oh! Anybody else coming?'

'No.'

'Then I should say the joint will be enough,' returned Miss Belsize with a meditative air. 'You won't want any side-dishes.'

Mrs. Belsize bit her lip, but made no reply. She thought of asking sarcastically how many potatoes she ought to provide, and only refrained because she was at heart afraid of her sister-in-law. The Rev. Charles Belsize, Rector of Bedminton, was himself afraid of his sister Elizabeth. So were a good many people whose fate brought them into contact with that lady.

The Rector's sister was just forty-two, and she was 'rather plain'—that is to say, she had a large aggressive nose, a long upper lip, a sallow complexion, and a trifling hirsute appendage which was not an adornment. She lived permanently at the Rectory; the reason being that a large part of her little fortune had been expended in helping to purchase the Bedminton living, on the tacit understanding that she would make the parsonage her home. The Belsizes, it may be observed, parenthetically, were of good family, being in fact second cousins of the Earl of Oxtou, but poor. Miss Belsize was at heart what schoolboys call 'a good sort;' but she was also a very managing person. She managed her sister-in-law so well that the poor little parsoness was sometimes tempted to wish that she had never been born, or that she had remained Jane Skinner to the end of her days.

The Rector was a stout, comfortable man of moderate views, and a gentleman. He sympathised with his wife, but always counselled her to let Elizabeth have her own way. 'It pleases her, my dear; and really it doesn't matter,' was his favourite formula for soothing his wife into compliance with some new demand on her patience. And 'poor Mrs. Belsize,' as all her friends called her, always gave way.

The new curate turned out to be a tall and rather bulky person, with a pasty complexion, clean-shaven except for a short section of stubbly whisker on either cheek. His eyes were small, dark, and set, as it were, on the outer surface of his face. His hair was black. It was parted in the middle, long, and wavy. His Roman collar was spotless. His long coat was of sound material and well-built. Such was the outward appearance of the Rev. Martin L. Noble.

'You are a moderate churchman, I believe, Mr. Noble?' asked Miss Belsize during dinner.

The curate smiled and bowed assent.

'I am very glad to hear it,' said the lady in her deep, bell-like voice. 'Do you approve of "Hymns Ancient and Modern?"' she queried, after a pause.

There was absolutely nothing to guide the examinee, not the slightest indication whether he would be required to bless or to ban the well-known hymn-book.

'I should not like to say that I approve of every word and every line——' he began, with an air of bland impartiality.

'I should think not, indeed!' burst out Miss Belsize.

The sailing course seemed now plain enough.

'There are hymns in that book,' continued the curate, with a solemn contraction of visage, 'which——' Here the speaker caught a look of annoyance on the Rector's face, and instead of saying, as he had intended, 'which have a distinctly Romanist tendency,' he substituted, with perfect self-possession, 'which no collection could very well spare.'

The Rector laughed in his sleeve, and the lady was but partially satisfied. But the new curate soon made Miss Belsize understand that his views exactly coincided with her own; and thereupon he advanced rapidly in the lady's favour. She lent Mr. Noble a copy of Miss Havergal's Poetical Works; and when the curate brought it back with many expressions of admiration for the poetry and of gratitude to her who had placed such gems within his reach, Miss Belsize went so far as to take a pen and write on the fly-leaf, 'Martin L. Noble, from his sincere friend and well-wisher, E. B.' Mr. Noble had already explained to the Rector's sister that his second name was Luther, but that he hesitated about using it, partly because he was unwilling to challenge comparison with so great a man, partly because Luther (not having the good fortune to be born an Englishman) countenanced some doctrines which were hardly scriptural. It will be seen from these

trifling circumstances that Miss Belsize and Mr. Noble were no way averse to each other's society; but whether the curate really had the courage, the foolhardiness one might say, to become a suitor for that lady's hand was not certain. Public opinion in the parish was divided on the question. The unmarried ladies between twenty-five and forty ridiculed the idea of the curate's having any serious intentions with regard to the Rector's sister. But there were other parishioners who shook their heads and smiled in a knowing way when the subject was broached in their hearing.

Speculation on the point was stopped, however, by an event of such transcendent importance that it eclipsed all matters of ordinary interest. A report reached Bedminton that the Prime Minister had selected the Reverend Charles Belsize to be Bishop of St. Ninian's; and the report turned out to be true. The fact was that the unexpected demise of two intermediate heirs had made it highly probable that the Rector of Bedminton would before long become the twenty-ninth Earl of Alderney; and the Premier, no doubt, judged that it would conduce to the dignity and glory of the Church if a lay and a spiritual peerage were united in the same person.

The newly appointed bishop quickly resigned his living, and in the course of a few weeks took up his residence at the palace at St. Ninian's along with his wife and sister. As for the duties at Bedminton, Mr. Noble continued to discharge them pending the appointment of a new rector. He naturally found it desirable to seek advice from his late rector pretty often on matters parochial; and as Bedminton was but a few miles distant from the cathedral city, Mr. Noble was nearly as often at the palace as he had formerly been at the rectory. It often happened that the Bishop was from home when the curate-in-charge came to seek counsel from him; and frequently, on these occasions, the multifarious duties which now devolved on Mrs. Belsize compelled her to leave it to her sister-in-law to entertain Mr. Noble. When this happened Mr. Noble seemed particularly well satisfied, and Miss Belsize also appeared to be well content.

One night, after this sort of thing had been going on for some time, Mrs. Belsize, with a very pleased look on her pretty face, hinted to her lord that perhaps it might be as well if he spoke a word or two to Mr. Noble.

'About what, my dear?' asked the Bishop, sleepily.

'Well, about Elizabeth, you know,' said the young matron, blushing a little as she spoke.

'Good gracious, Jan !' cried his lordship in much alarm, 'you don't mean that I should ask the man what his intentions are with regard to my sister ?'

'Certainly not,' responded his wife with some dignity. 'That would be absurd. Besides, it would be useless. His intentions, his hopes, I should rather say, are clear enough. Elizabeth and he understand each other perfectly. And, oh ! Charles, I am so glad !'

The prelate was not so enthusiastic. He quite appreciated the advantage of getting his sister to manage somebody else, instead of him and his wife ; but the Reverend Martin L. Noble was not exactly the kind of man he would have chosen for a brother-in-law.

'Are you sure ?' he asked dubiously.

'Oh, yes. Elizabeth told me to-day. "Mr. Noble and I understand one another perfectly." These were her very words.'

'Then, if she has made up her mind, why need I meddle ?'

'Because I think he seems to be in some doubt as to the Bedminton living. It is in Elizabeth's gift, you know ; and naturally she would present Mr. Noble. But he can't marry till he gets a living ; and as she is the patron I fancy he has a delicacy in broaching the subject to her.'

'Delicacy ? I shouldn't have thought—well, it *is* rather a delicate thing to ask a woman for her hand and a living at the same time ; and, as you say, he can't take the one unless he gets the other. I think all the more of Noble for his hesitating to speak under these circumstances. But Elizabeth should be able to—to make things clear to him. If *she* has made up her mind—that's the main point, you know.'

'Oh, yes ; I'm *sure* she has, Charles.'

'I will see her in the morning, then ; and, if she wishes it, I'll say a word to Mr. Noble from which he will be able to understand how the land lies. I suppose he really *has* been—eh ?'

'No one who has ever seen them together could have any doubt on *that* point,' said the Bishop's wife decisively ; and the matrimonial conference was at an end.

The Bishop, after a little consideration, made up his mind that the curate of Bedminton was as good a match as his sister was likely to make, and being keenly alive to the inconvenience of her remaining permanently at the palace, he took an early opportunity of saying a word or two to Mr. Noble.

'My wife tells me,' he said pleasantly, 'that you and Miss Belsize have seen a good deal of each other lately—have been a good deal in each other's company, in fact—ahem !'

The curate seemed confused, changed colour, ejaculated, 'Oh, my lord!' and murmured something indistinct.

'Well, that's all as it should be, I suppose. I don't know that I have any objection,' said the prelate, hurrying on to the other branch of his subject. 'But as to ways and means. Of course you know the living of Bedminton is in my sister's gift, as sole surviving trustee of—of a settlement; and I see no reason why she shouldn't present you.'

'Oh, my lord!' cried the Rev. Martin Noble, clasping his hands, 'you take a load off my mind! I could not bring myself to ask Miss Belsize for the preferment, while——'

'Just so,' said the good Bishop with a smile. 'It would have been awkward. I understand. But I think we may regard the matter as being settled now. And we shall be glad to see you at the palace any day next week—say Tuesday.'

'Thank you a thousand times, my lord. There is, however, one thing that occurs to me, which it might be well to mention. The Bishop of Warminster, I happen to know, is going to marry his daughter to the Vicar of Pendlebury, a Mr. Marks—a very excellent *pr*—clergyman, but hardly of sufficient standing in the diocese. It happens that the rectory of Wichgate, in the Warminster diocese, is vacant at present: the right of presentation belongs to the Bishop. He would like to present his future son-in-law; but he hesitates to do so, for reasons which—which I need not go into. He fears that people might say that a bishop's son-in-law——'

'I see—I see. Most ridiculous. All Radical cant and nonsense. As if a patron could not be more sure of his own flesh and blood—or, well, a man deemed worthy to be his son-in-law—than he could be of a stranger.'

'Certainly, my lord; most certainly.' (The Bishop was not quite sure, but he rather thought that there was a suspicion, a suggestion of *ing*, as if the curate had really said 'certingly.' It hurt him to think that his sister should marry a man to whom a suspicion of that nature could attach itself; but things had gone too far for him to recede.) 'Still, people say unpleasant things, which get into the newspapers, and tend to undermine a clergyman's influence for good.'

'Just so.'

'I fear that there might be talk of that kind about Mr. Marks, and it might do harm. Now, it has occurred to me that if Miss Belsize were to be so very kind as to present Mr. Marks to

Bedminton, and if at the same time your lordship would be so good as to mention my name to the Bishop of Warminster in connection with the living of Wichgate——'

'I see—I see. Virtually an exchange of livings between you and this Mr. Marks. By this means a good deal of ignorant, spiteful talk might be prevented—eh? I'll think it over; and, if my sister approves of the plan, I'll ask my brother of Warminster's chaplain to come over and have a chat with me. I have no doubt that things can be arranged. Miss Belsize presents Mr. Marks to Bedminton; the Bishop of Warminster gives you Wichgate instead. Very good. Are the livings of the same value?'

'As nearly as possible the same, my lord. And I may say that Wichgate is in every sense as desirable a place of residence as Bedminton.'

'Then, no doubt, I shall be able to arrange the matter satisfactorily,' quoth the prelate, turning to leave the room.

The Bishop of St. Ninian's was, in fact, delighted with his future brother-in-law's suggestion. The exchange of livings would blunt the edge of any attack on the Bishop of Warminster; and for himself he felt that, much as he loved his sister, it would suit him better if on her marriage she were transferred to another diocese. It sometimes seemed to him that Miss Belsize was gradually undertaking the management of the see of St. Ninian's.

It was unfortunate that just at this juncture Mr. Noble had an attack of influenza, which confined him to the house; and when he recovered so far as to go out of doors, he proceeded at once, under the doctor's instructions, to the seaside. But the wedding-day of the Rev. William Marks and the Bishop of Warminster's daughter had been already fixed, and it was necessary that, if the scheme of exchanging livings was to be carried out, it should be done at once. Thus it happened that the formalities of presentation and institution had to take place before the new rector of Wichgate had an opportunity of seeing Miss Belsize. Indeed, it was only by accident that Mrs. Belsize heard that Mr. Noble had gone to Wichgate direct from Brighton, and 'read himself in.'

'He might have come here in the first place,' said Miss Belsize, with some asperity in her tone; 'but perhaps he was too weak to come so far, while there was probably some legal necessity for his entering into possession of his living at once.'

'Perhaps so. But, I say, Elizabeth——'

'Why *will* you persist in using that odious phrase, "I say"?

Especially now, my dear, when, as the wife of a bishop, your example naturally attracts attention.'

Mrs. Belsize's cheek flushed; she clenched her little fist under the table. Was she a child to be talked to in this way? As a mark of her displeasure she kept silence till her sister-in-law begged her to resume her discourse.

'I was only going to suggest,' she said, 'that as we are engaged to dine and sleep at Warminster to-morrow night, we might drive over to Wichgate from Warminster in the morning, and see your new home.'

Miss Belsize readily fell in with this proposal; and on the following day the two ladies proceeded to Wichgate Rectory from Warminster in a hired fly. During the drive Miss Belsize was engaged in composing dignified yet cutting reproofs for her defaulting and ungrateful lover. The rectory, as Mrs. Belsize kindly pointed out, seemed all that was desirable; but the furniture of the drawing-room, into which the two ladies were shown, was not of a soul-satisfying nature.

'Of course this must be entirely altered,' Miss Belsize was saying to her sister-in-law as the door opened, and a little old lady, inclining to stoutness, with fat brown curls (palpably false) attached to her forehead, came in. She made a profound curtsy, and glanced inquiringly from one of her visitors to the other, while the heart of Miss Belsize sank within her as she asked herself, '*Can this be his mother?*'

'Which of you ladies, may I ask, is *Miss Belsize?*?' inquired the little old lady, clasping her mittened hands in front of her.

'This is she,' said the Bishop's wife; upon which the old lady ran up to Elizabeth, caught her hands; carried them to her breast, and turned her eyes slowly to the ceiling, until her face was nearly horizontal.

'Our benefactress!' murmured she. 'With all respects to our Bishop's lady [another curtsy], but our benefactress [an arch, affectionate glance towards Miss Belsize] must 'ave the first place in our 'arts, *always*.'

'But I don't understand,' said Miss Belsize, with her usual deliberate emphasis. 'Who are you? Are you Mr. Noble's mother?'

'Oh dear no, madam [with a smile of surpassing archness]. I'm *her* mother.'

'Whose?'

'The bride's mother, you know. We only came on Thursday

—the marriage was only a week ago—so *really*, you know, this is a bit of the honeymoon. They had been engaged twelve months, and it might have been twelve years but for your goodness, madam. My son-in-law has explained everything to me. The appointment was nominally that of the Bishop, but *really*—’ Another expressive glance, more arch even than the former one.

‘Good heavens!’ thought Miss Belsize, ‘what has that man been daring to say to those two women about me?’

Her indignation gave her strength; but it was hard—oh! it was hard—to have such ample causes of anger and not be able to show a trace of it. Miss Belsize was unable to sit still long. She got up, and muttering something by way of adieu, went to the fly which still waited for the two ladies, followed by her sister-in-law, and totally unmoved by the entreaties of Mrs. Herbert (so the small stout elderly person was named) to wait and receive the grateful thanks of the bride and bridegroom.

As Miss Belsize stepped into the fly she caught sight of a figure in black—the Reverend Martin Noble’s—crowned by a very wide black felt hat. One of his arms was concealed behind the figure of a young woman, whose head reposed comfortably somewhere in the neighbourhood of the wide black felt. The two were coming on slowly towards the house, all unconscious of Mrs. Herbert, who was standing at an open window waving her arms at them to attract their attention.

‘Good heavens!’ said Miss Belsize to herself, ‘if they should see that old lunatic! If she should take it into her head to shout to them!’ She hurried into the fly, and astonished the somnolent flyman by the energy of her tone as she commanded him to drive back to Warminster.

During the drive she maintained a solemn silence; and never afterwards was she heard to allude to the Rector of Wichgate, or to any of his ways, words, or works.

But not long after the visit paid by the two ladies to Wichgate Rectory Mr. Noble received an invitation, which he well knew was a summons, from his new diocesan.

‘Look here, Mr. Noble,’ said the Bishop of Warminster, ‘will you give me plain answers to one or two plain questions? Did I not appoint you to the living of Wichgate at the suggestion of Miss Belsize?’

‘I believe so, my lord,’ said the Rector with a bow.

‘And did not she recommend you to me because it was understood that you and she were to be married?’

'What, my lord? Do I hear aright? I? Married to Miss Belsize?' and the reverend gentleman's eyes wandered about the room, as if seeking a clue to the mystery.

'Come now, sir,' said the Bishop sternly, 'I am speaking as one man of the world to another. Was it not so arranged?'

'Never, my lord. I am ready to take my oath of it.'

'Or understood?'

'Not in the least, so far as I was concerned. Why, my lord, during the conversation between the Bishop of St. Ninian's and myself there was not a word, not a syllable——'

'Perhaps not. But was there no love-making?'

'Love-making?' echoed the Rector with a smile. 'Your lordship cannot be personally acquainted with Miss Belsize.'

'She seems to have thought so, at any rate,' said the Bishop bluntly.

'It is possible, and it grieves me to the heart to think that it should be possible,' said Mr. Noble, pausing for a moment as if to concentrate his intellect in an act of the purest justice. 'I can only say, or rather hint, that some ladies, after they pass a certain age, are notoriously liable to mistake the most ordinary politeness for—I need say no more. Doubtless your lordship understands.'

'Yes; I think I *do* understand,' said the Bishop slowly, and with a glance so peculiar that for the first time in his life Mr. Noble felt abashed.

There, perforce, the matter ended. The Rector of Wichgate is a very popular man, and he is confident that the Bishop of Warminster will soon forget the unpleasant circumstance which attended his first coming into the diocese.

It may be mentioned that not long ago Mr. Noble presented several volumes (the sweepings of his library) to the Wichgate Sunday School and Parochial Book Club. Among them was a beautifully bound copy of Miss Havergal's poems, the fly-leaf of which was missing. The Rector is now a High Churchman; he has dropped the 'Luther' altogether, even the initial.

Miss Belsize still resides at the episcopal palace of St. Ninian's; but it is understood in the diocese that she is to be united in the bonds of holy matrimony to the Rev. Simeon Baldun, one of his lordship's chaplains, as soon as a suitable living falls vacant. It is likewise understood in the diocese that the marriage ceremony is to precede the rite of institution to the benefice.

SOME HIGH NOTES.

Villa Rosatch, S. Moritz, July 26th.—‘*Mossieu repond pas!*’ says the boots of the ‘Steinbock’ at Chur, looking as if he were going to cry with vexation. He stands outside my bedroom door in his stocking-feet with a paper in his hand, and knocks with rustic timidity at the doors of such of us as are in want of the early diligence for S. Moritz. But, ‘*Mossieu repond pas!*’ says he distressfully, in German-Swiss-French; so I beat my fists on my companion’s door, like a toy rabbit on a drum. It’s half-past four, and, though we in the valley are grey, sunlight is stealing among the snow patches on the mountains. The only sound in the hotel, save the soft footfall and timid knocking of the boots, is the brawl and rush of the Plessur River; so close, that it seems to be pouring along the corridors and cascading down the stairs. Outside, I can see them washing carriages round the village fountain; for this is the end of the railway, and we have fifty miles and more to drive to the Engadine.

At last, the time being four in the afternoon, the sun blazing down on us, it is clear we draw near Italy. The *wirthschaft* becomes *osteria*; the *handlung*, *negozio*; the haymakers resemble our own dear organ-grinders with scythes; the women, with coloured handkerchiefs bound round their heads, recall the ladies who stand with little birds for fortune-telling in the Brompton Road; the insurance plates on the houses instead of Basel bear Trieste. On that track like a bridle-path in the Isle of Wight, or a carrier’s road from the Norfolk coast to London, there crawls the Septimer route, once crossed by emperors of Rome and Germany with their hordes, over the mountains down to Maloya and the Val d’Inferno; and here is ours, the Julier Pass, that for the next two hours holds us clinched in its zigzags, like the child’s toy that opens out for wooden soldiers. Up, up, for two hours we crawl in the diligence like a gaudy fly in the hot sun, our only comrades in the waste the weather-beaten telegraph-poles. Something pathetic to me in the contemplation of those wires that run from South Kensington to the Kulm at S. Moritz, the last chance for the poor consumptive. How often must they not have sadly flashed, ‘George died last night, quite painlessly;’ or ‘Amy

worse, hopeless; and now stout and yet peeling from the so great extremes of weather, they stretch straight up the desolate pass; while we crawl and bend up, up, so sharply that the blue and red umbrellas of the daughters of America are just below us in their carriage, and a peasant's cart is just above. Near the top of the pass, 7,360 feet above the sea—or say a mile and a half or so above the nigger minstrels rattling on Ramsgate sands—we pause to breathe at the last house, grey and solitary; the true top, 140 feet higher up, is marked by two round milestones placed there by Augustus when he made his military road from Chiavenna down to Chur. They are old, very old, but the snows above are older. 'What are two thousand years?' the snows above seem to say with a ghastly white sneer; 'you poor pieces of mica slate! Why, we are the direct representatives of the first snow that fell after the flood!'

And now, just as we went up, up, so we go down, down, the same zigzags, at a steady trot, sharply round and round, down to the Engadine and its lakes of malachite. Above, far away, are the snows of the Bernina; far below us through the dark green pines we see the white toy houses of Silvaplana and its little lake, that now looks almost like spilt quicksilver in the meadows. When we lumber into S. Moritz and lurch up at the post-office, my face is so stiff with sun and breeze it feels like a mask, and I can scarcely unbend it to direct the splendid hotel porter in blue and gold to our luggage.

Wednesday.—The chief charm of S. Moritz, at least to me, lies in its streets of wooden shops, of photographs, old silver, olive wood; even Caspari's, where they crowd for afternoon tea. It reminds me of what the Pantiles must have been once at Tunbridge Wells; indeed, the whole of S. Moritz-bad looks rather tentative, as though cautious speculators were waiting to see if its fashion were really permanent before making it more solid. Perhaps some of the look may be due to everything being shut up in the winter and lying snug under deep snow for four or five months. The village, the highest in the Engadine, where the invalids spend their winter, is three-quarters of a mile off above the lake; and there we stroll to look for rooms, seeing that we have come here for quiet, and that living at our hotel is rather like taking up residence at the Café Royal in Regent Street. And there, in the Villa Rosatch, we find them, with a little balcony looking over the lake, and a huge trout rod hanging over the side of it, like a sign

for a tackle-shop; with great stoves in the corners in case the snow come; with carpets, rare luxury in the Engadine, and with the electric light hanging like a frozen water-lily from the ceiling. Strange, this mixture of extreme Alpine simplicity and the electric light one observes everywhere in the Engadine. At night, when black shadows lie thunderous under the broad wooden eaves, and through the deep-sunk windows you see peasant heads round a yellow lamp of paraffin, in the streets the great white globes flicker and fizz as they do at Charing Cross Station; and under the archway of the houses, a demi-lune in the centre almost like entering an ancient college, the big St. Bernard lounges so that he may sleep in the shade. In the morning—for part of the cure is to sleep with the window open—we are woke by the most musical tinkle of the cattle bells, like ice clinking against the crystal sides of the lake. It is six o'clock, and the sun is shining as though it all were Italy in a refrigerator.

Sunday, July 31st.—The Italian haymakers slouch along over the cobbles in the bright morning sun, carrying their coats and large faded cotton umbrellas; under one of the house-archways they stand chattering round piles of cheap clothing spread on tables. The other side of the street is a gaudy stall of handkerchiefs, beloved of the women; arm-in-arm they stare at them. If perchance on the stall they see one of gayer colour than they happen to have on their head they straightway buy it. Then the men lounge on the wall and point at them with their umbrellas as they go past as bright as paroquets. The sonorous church bells beat, but somehow one never sees a priest. I've seen neither priest nor beggar since I've been here.

I looked in at one of their churches; it was quite plain and whitewashed. A large pulpit of inlaid wood, with a sounding-board and an hour-glass, like the one John Knox is thundering out of in Wilkie's picture, and a text in Romanisch—*Deo sola gloria ed honur*—were the only ornaments. In the Catholic chapel a servant girl and three little children were having a lively sort of nursery talk. As we came in they bethought themselves of prayer, and down went the maid on her knees, crossing herself devoutly. The children looked at her sudden dive in astonishment, then saw us and did the same; only the youngest, in her haste to begin, toppled over and fell under the seat. Saints and angels, you never heard a child yell so lustily in your life!

The shops are most of them open; all of them down at the

baths. I went in and got shaved; the garçon was not of this savage country, he thanked heaven; he was from Paris, *rue Montmartre*, close to the Bourse, and once he got back he would never come here again, his sacred word of honour! He was never warm. Did I know how much underclothing he'd got on? He stropped the razor in the palm of his hand and would tell me; which he did, at great and particular length, of flannel. '*Voyez-vous,*' a year ago last May he ran to catch a train, got very hot, took off his coat, and sat with the windows open; result, inflammation of the lungs and a year's illness; doctors at ten francs a visit, says he, laying his finger along his nose. '*C'était assommant!*' Then in May of this year he went to visit his parents in Alsace to recover his strength and get rid of his cough; did no work there; did I expect him to *piocher la terre, par exemple?* As a last resource, for a complete cure he came up here; when the sun shines hotly he finds it bearable; when it doesn't, *je tousse, je tousse, je tousse!* '*Quel pays!*' He's going back to Paris in September, and if he finds the winter, *rue Montmartre*, too much for him he's going to try shaving in Africa. He must have warmth. Do I understand? *He must have warmth.* He says that with that extreme seriousness which every Frenchman affects when speaking of himself. In fact, I'm inclined to think that the only time a Frenchman ever thinks it worth his while to be quite serious is when he's talking about himself.

Tuesday.—Reader, have you ever been on a glacier? I like that old-fashioned magazine-article style; sometimes it is 'Reader, that is if ever I am so fortunate as to have one.' It recalls youth and hot July Sunday afternoon readings of the *Leisure Hour*. Again the bright acacia waves in our London garden; again I hear the barrow-fruitman's distant drowsy cry of 'Strawberry ripe! fine strawberry ripe!'

It was a bitter March day, this second of August, as we drove into Pontresina. Pontresina was out in the streets, looking chilly, and wondering where on earth we were going on so bad a day, with alpenstocks and all those wraps; Pontresina was of opinion, skilled opinion, that the day was going to be even worse, and that the Rosegg glacier would be impossible. But we pressed on, past the stony tennis-court and the young ladies trying to keep warm, down the five miles of harsh and broken valley road, along the noisy river that looks as though composed of melting lemon-water ices. Ragged pine trees are all round us, and through the shifting

mist we catch glimpses of the stern peaks and the everlasting snows. Three-quarters of a mile from the foot of the glacier there's a little inn, where we stop for lunch; the room, with its stove, is like the first chamber of the Turkish bath—so hot that we prefer to eat our rolls and eggs in a small square tent outside, peaked with pert flags. We throw the remains of our pancakes to the hens, finish the coffee, and prepare to start. A guide comes out of the kitchen to look at us, with an ice axe and a marmot's skin on his back for knapsack; but we trudge off alone, and the sky lifts and shows a patch of blue.

There is the glacier below us, dingy with its valley life. 'See what you make of me,' it seems to say, 'if you try to civilise me; look above and see what I am, monstrous leprous snake, as I crawl up to my mountain home, so dazzling white that I seem like cloud.' And so, indeed, it is; the higher we climb the cliff, the more of it we see, the purer the glacier grows. Down at its edge, its curling, scornful lip at the head of the valley, it looks almost like the Serpentine in thaw, scratched and scarred by giant skaters, rubbled with loose stones like bad cement. We climb steadily till we reach the hut, where a rough table and seat tell us we can get milk and brandy if we please; the old man who lives there sits with his arms on the table, smoking and watching us; a boy in a tattered cloak, like a Calabrian peasant, stands looking after the cows whose bells we hear. Still we climb till we reach the cairn, where a few egg-shells and a chicken-bone or two tell of previous privations. And below is the glacier, grown pure and white, stealing out of the mist as though it were the arrested overflow from some vast fountain play in some distant cloudy Versailles. But we must not rest; we must cross the torrent if it be not too swollen; we must reach the *Mortel-hutte*. Behold the *Mortel-hutte*! Push the heavy door and enter. Somehow the sloping planks that face us remind me of the Morgue, only that they are covered with straw. In the beams above are stuffed blankets and rugs for travellers; in the corner is a gipsy fireplace, saucepans, a saw for wood, a kettle, and an axe; the other side are empty champagne and claret bottles, and the printed regulations to be observed by all who enter and remain the night. The hut is provided by the Swiss Alpine Club for climbers who wish to cross the glacier and make the ascents on the other side; a rough but kindly hospitality which asks only you should clean the saucepans before you leave. It looks rather like a genteel cow-

house, and is scribbled all over with genteel names and dates. Below is ever the glacier; the edge drips, drips, and, peering under the frowning eaves, we have some notion of its majestic depth. Below glimmers a faint unearthly blue, like the sky on a brilliant frosty February morning.

Some one says the glacier is dangerous; friends, let us try. I struggle up the sloping wall of ice; my alpenstock breaks the brittle surface; I am on the top of the side ridge; a cold and mortal vapour exhales from the stealthy mass; I hear the gurgle and ripple of some under-current, the ice water that runs through the creature's hollow veins. Again (ever these cockney impressions) I feel I am on a lonely, broken Serpentine; London is deserted, ruined, sunk in another glacial period. Where is the New Zealander to ask me if I won't have a pair of skates on?—Ah! a distant cry! a man striding down the valley-side waves his stick and shouts to me. He wants to know if we won't have a guide, I suppose. Enough for one day; we climb the hill again, and at a dog-trot reach the restaurant in just half the time it took us to ascend.

And there across the valley we see chamois, veritable Alpine chamois. I watch them through the glass, five of them, feeding under a rock; then, leaving each other, racing in little circles, leaping; and then, rigidly still, attentive. Down a narrow gully come six more. They stand in attitudes, as one sees them drawn in books. Gentlemen of the French Guard, fire first! And the first five begin again their circling and leaping; tempting the others, as it were, to charge. Without the glass, the hillside is lifeless and blank; absolutely nothing to be seen by the most far-sighted.

Sunday.—As we lay under a rock, eating hard-boiled eggs, we heard the roar and rattle of an avalanche. It sounded, as one says when one hears an unexpected crash in a house, like something upstairs. It was more to me as though some huge box had slid down into nature's hold, as one sees the luggage rattled down into the hold at Dover. We could see nothing; the day was absolutely pure and motionless; all the innumerable peaks round and below us,

Horns of silver, fangs of crystal set on edge,

and some as rigid and dazzling in their snow as tents; none of their glaciers that we could see had slipped; and yet, somewhere, the Spirit of the Alps had given an impish push to some few

myriad tons of ice and rock, and some long-suffering mountain was breathing the easier for the relief. Far, far below us the ever musical tinkle of the cattle bells and the occasional sharp cry of the marmots.

We clambered down the side and across the snow, down into Suvretta valley; thence to Campfer to tea, our faces blazing. Most comforting, most home-like, the sound of the church bell. The English service was held in the village church, and as we clamped over the cobbles we could see the ringer in his blouse pulling away at the bell and puffing his china pipe. The church was cool and whitewashed, with a glaring piece of native stained glass at the end, like a cheap kaleidoscope. They left the door open during service, and we saw the cattle going past to be milked; one stared and snuffed at us heavily; I could smell her warm and drowsy milk. Two little peasant girls stood in the doorway to watch how the foreigners prayed in their own church. You would have thought yourself in some unrestored English village edifice, only that we prayed for the President of the United States, for the Federal Council of this land; only that the ladies' jackets and dresses looked a little crushed, as though they had long lain packed; only that when they knelt you saw what huge nails they had in their boots.

I strolled back to S. Moritz after service and bought the *Telegraph* at the library. 'Out on the heell wass I all day?' asked the librarian, wistfully. 'Beastly it wass, dees business; all week, haf-past six, haf-past eight; weesh it wass over.'

Villa Rosatch, S. Moritz-Dorf, August 13th. . . . 'Here's some edelweiss for you. Yes, I know it's to be bought in quantities, but I really found this, and in a very imminent deadly place, too. Not like the Fex valley, where they plant little red flags alongside of it so that the tourist may find it the easier.

'We've taken to playing cricket with broom-sticks (you know the Eton broom-sticks) on the drying-ground behind the Kurhaus. It is so home-like to hear youth declare itself *beastly sorry* when it drops a very obvious catch. This afternoon they were so misguided as to give me a full-pitch to leg. I hit it very hard, oh, very hard! and it caught a young Russian lady sauntering across the ground whack in the ribs. I ran up white with alarm to find her barking like a dog, which I take to be the Muscovite method of showing pain and fear. She speaks English perfectly, and I did my best to apologise, but I fear she'll refuse to dance with me

at the Victoria to-night. Never mind, I got fifty-three, and they couldn't get me out.

'In the rooms upstairs we've a couple of musicians staying. *Quels drôles de gens, les artistes!* They stop in all day playing; one braying at a massive symphony he's composing on the piano, a mixture of Wagner and Berlioz; the other sits on the edge of his bed twiddling scales on the fiddle. He's not well, I believe, as when he does go out of his room he's got his head wrapped up; I always know how he is in the morning by the intensity of pain he wrings from his instrument. They take their exercise mostly at night, bareheaded and smoking cigarettes. I saw one of them in knickerbockers, leaning against the post of the electric light, gazing up at the luminary. I suppose he was seeking inspiration, as old-fashioned people used to from the moon. *Quels drôles de gens!*

'We drove over to Maloya the other day, behind horses so white with dust that they looked like the pale animals of the Apocalypse. There the Engadine struggles in good earnest with Italy, and I fancy that Italy gets rather the best of it, so hot and siesta-like it grew after lunch. We strolled down to the gorge and sat in the delicious misty draught of the torrent; below twisted the white road like that detestable fumigated *ruban* they sicken us with in the Strand, down to Chiavenna. I looked at the peasants with singular interest as descendants of Balbus and Cicero; but I am bound to say I have never yet seen an Italian, gentle or simple, who gave me the impression of being able to build a wall, much less impeach a pro-consul. The gigantic hotel I found had many Londoners and the usual *boss*. Every hotel in the Engadine of any eminence has its boss. You pick him out at once by the way he comes in to *table d'hôte*, with a slight look of surprise that they should have dared to begin without him. He has been to the Engadine for at least the last fifteen years, and this year he is very much astonished that he can't have "my usual rooms." "I always come here," he says, "you see they know me;" as though that were any sort of recommendation. But it is a good thing to know the boss yourself, for if you have any difficulty he takes you in mysteriously to see the manager, and says, "This gentleman is a friend of mine," which very properly settles it. And every year he says, "I sha'n't come here again," and every year he comes; sometimes, even, in the winter. Bosses would be perfect if only they had some sense of humour. But no king ever has a sense of

humour, or he wouldn't be there stuck up on a throne. True, Charles II. had some; but then what a bad king he was!

'Farewell! Next year you must come to the Engadine; and may you have such weather as ours. They say there hasn't been so fine a summer known since '59. We are going to Pontresina as soon as we can get in there; at present our hard-worked friends at the bar are monopolising most of the best rooms.'

Tuesday.—When the youthful Engadiner grows tired of driving an *einspanner* in the summer, of doing a little carpentering in the winter, he makes up his mind to see the world and make his fortune. But, if he possibly can, he always comes back to his long lean valley to die. If he has made a fortune, in nine cases out of ten as a confectioner, he builds him a chalet of glistening pine, with a pious motto carved under the eaves, in Latin or Romanisch; the garden is brilliant with flowers stacked in pots (seeing they won't grow in the ground), and decked with large silver balls on tripods that make your eyes ache in the sun. All the windows on the ground floor have flower-pots in them, too; and, up above, the trimmest white blinds; while the electric light hangs in the broad balcony, and a great globe of it on a tall pole in front of the hall-door. At the gate he plants a board with a notice in German, Italian, and French that entrance is prohibited, which seems to have the contrary effect as well, for I never yet saw anyone coming out. My impression is, the owner leaves his chalet early in the morning and spends his day visiting the hotel proprietors; at any rate, if by chance you penetrate into the sacred inner office of your hotel you are sure to find a prosperous middle-aged gentleman making decently merry with the proprietor, the manager, and sometimes the head-waiter. There's an open box of cigarettes and a slim bottle of Rhine wine, and you may be sure they are discussing the chances of the vintage in Italy, and making arrangements to go down and see after their purchases of it in November. But if the Engadiner makes no fortune as confectioner, then all his days he remains a waiter. Oh, my brothers who dine in restaurants (Gatti's, Monico's, the Café Royal, according to our means), let us always duly remember the waiter; that tall, supple, dark man who seems Italian, but is in reality an Engadiner. Let us remember that anything we give him brings him nearer home, is added to the pile in the greasy leather purse on which he sleeps; one day to carry him, *viâ* Flushing, home to S. Moritz or Samaden, to the squat white house with the heavy roof and the deep-set

windows, down whose dark stairs he paddled bare-footed as a child, up which he hopes one day—you understand? then *pauca verba*. Now I have told you, you have no excuse for ever giving him less than threepence.

Saturday, August 27th. Pontresina.—So we don't unpack, but take an evening walk instead along the river, past the Sansouci, towards the Morteratsch glacier; and there, almost under the monster's sullen lip, we find a very honest fellow milking a cow and talking to a friend. 'No, *mein Herr*,' he says, looking up with a broad sunburnt smile (charming contrast to the dark scowl of the glacier), he has no cup, but if we please he will give us a drink out of the pail—of shallow pinewood, clean, wholesome, sweet wood-milk smelling. The milk is frothing with deep and creamy bubbles; there is a gentle, seething, hissing murmur in it. Indescribable, the beneficent warm sense as it creeps downwards, wrapping the inner man round like a blanket. Over the high mountain ridge swings the slender hammock of the new moon, as though the evening star were resting there, after the mighty heat of her sky-climb.

As we stand on the bridge, the cold grey glacier water tumbling along below, a man comes out of the inn and blows a small curved bugle. Some plaintive Swiss air of sorrow at leaving the mountains, it seems to me. The girls who are clearing away the tea and coffee of the afternoon from the little zinc tables, come down towards the bridge to listen; a guide or two from the inn puff their pipes approvingly; while a loose-boned German, scarlet from the sun, pulls himself past with his alpenstock. You can only hear a note of the bugle every now and then, for the noise of the water. It is ten minutes to seven, and in a moment the peaks above the glacier, just now a warm and sunny white, fade ghastly pale. They look as though they had suddenly seen a ghost; perhaps some one or two are walking there, now the sun has gone, killed years ago. As we stroll back towards Pontresina the church bell tolls heavily, heavily; behind us the peaks grow yet more terrifically white. Now it seems to me a funeral of some lost guide, and all those high snows the winding-sheet.

Sunday.—I was looking at the English graves, so pathetic always abroad—of the poor lady lost last September by the fall of the diligence in the Albula pass; of the young man, son of Sir C. R., 'killed by a fall near this place;' at the graves of the dead, at thirty-two, twenty-nine, and thirty-three years of age, that

mean, I fear, consumption—when I saw a woman in dark clothes, not mourning (she was too poor for that), but the ordinary working clothes that all the peasants wear, sitting on the wall of the smaller graveyard below, where the little graves all seemed to mark the resting-places of children. At her feet was a miniature inclosure fenced round with tiny, almost doll's-house white wooden palings; there was a little cross, too, perhaps six inches high, and hung on it a circlet of white beads. On the grass two children were sitting, arranging a few wild flowers; another, with a battered tin bowl, went down to the hillside torrent and filled it; and all the while the mother never moved; her hand was over her eyes, her head bent over the little grave; so complete, so touching an attitude of lost dejection I have never seen. We could not understand each other's language, but every line of her bent figure told me far more eloquently than words of her sorrow and her loss. I turned again as I went into the wood and saw her just wipe her eyes with the back of her hand and then sink again into the same unutterable grief. And all the time the children played with the flowers, the little maid went piously watering out of her tin bowl. The children here are so pretty. Who can doubt that the poor mother's heart was buried there deep, deep with her brown-faced, quick-eyed darling whose tiny sunburnt hands were folded restfully under the diminutive cross. You heard the click of the alpenstocks against the stones, as people came down, close by the church, from their long day's climb up Piz Languard.

Tuesday.—People are beginning to go home, to Portman Square and Lower Seymour Street, and such-like irreproachable neighbourhoods. You see groups and piles of luggage at half-past seven in the morning, waiting in the road opposite the post-office for the diligence from Poschiavo through the Bernina Pass to pick them up. Their *table d'hôte* friends and acquaintances come and see them off, and there are many regretful partings between the young men and maidens who have been dancing and climbing and walking together the month past. They hope to meet again, but it's ten to one they never do; for if the world is, as people say, very small, it is also very large. At these farewells stout middle-aged Englishmen develop an extraordinary politeness; they turn up with valedictory bouquets, and stand bareheaded till the diligence is out of sight. Then they come lumbering back to the hotel with their hands in their pockets, and reply to their wives' expostulations, 'Well, my dear, I don't suppose we shall ever see

them again ; you didn't ask them to call, I imagine.' The English are a fearless race ; to that they owe the possession of India and the Suez Canal shares ; but who ever heard of one of them asking a *table d'hôte* acquaintance to come and call ?

Sunday, September 11th.—Snow falling heavily, quietly, out of a sky densely charged with it. In the chilly English church I sit and watch it falling past Mrs. Bancroft's stained-glass window ; the parson's saw is drowned in sneezings, as at home in January. What with the church and dining in the restaurant without a stove, I wake in the morning with a terrible sore throat that would have delighted me at school but distresses me at Pontresina. So I summon my small friend the waiter, and beg him to procure me an English doctor. No English doctor left, he says (as though he had been all eaten at *table d'hôte*), but he can get me a German one who talks English very fine. There enters then (after an interval, in which I imagine him to be reading up the subject) a young gentleman in a sort of German covert coat, who bows low and regards me fixedly. At last he says, 'You 'ave pain the front 'ed. No ? You 'ave feevre. No ?' Then he unscrews a small thermometer, tucks it under my arm, says, 'old 'im goot, so ;' walks to the window, blows his nose lustily, and remains looking out of it. The wood roars up the stove, the snow falls as in a pathetic Adelphi drama, and I feel convinced I am going to die, to have a five-franc piece laid on each eye, with only waiters for mourners. True enough, the thermometer shows I have *feevre*, and the young gentleman looks at it and smiles. He does that, I say to myself, to reassure me, because the case is really grave. I am about to burst into tears and demand writing materials, when he says, 'Show troot, pleass !' He opens his own mouth extremely wide, and, brandishing a toothbrush, gazes down into me with a startled expression. His mind is made up ; now he knows what is wrong with me ; I have a sore throat and must 'gurgle.' The treatment to be pursued is as follows : I must 'a box of water take,' and I must 'goot gurgle.' Nothing will save me but that ; 'goot gurgle every two, tree hour.' For food 'soup wiz *eier* in im,' and I muss not get out of bett. For the rest, 'Yes, you have feevre,' and he will send me the gurgle ; with which he buttons up the covert coat and bows himself away. He will do all that human skill can for me, I know, and the little waiter, too ; for whenever I ring the bell for soup, or more wood, he comes in triumphantly with another supply of 'gurgle.' It is

a white substance; for myself, I should say it was table salt; and it is invariably inclosed in a small box which I observe bears the name of the leading Pontresina jeweller.

For three days, while the snow falls, I gurgle to the best of my poor abilities and drink soup. On the fourth it is evident that more drastic remedies are to be taken, since the young gentleman appears with a large wooden box under his arm, which he unfastens with his usual smile (delight in a new toy, I remark to myself), and which I am very much alarmed to see contains shining steel instruments. He fastens a large glittering disk on his eye, with a small hole in it; he looks something like a diver and something like Cyclops; he takes a 'box of water' and a long penetrating-looking instrument with a brush on the end, beckons me to the window, and before I know what he is doing he is rattling the instrument up and down my throat, exactly like a chimney-sweep cleaning a chimney. What I suffered! I try to explain to the friends who come and sit with me what I have been suffering, but I can see from the look in their eye that they are not in the least interested. One even wishes he was me to be laid up in such beastly weather. My very travelling companion declares he has had all that and worse done to him when he's been ill, and then breaks off into a long, uninteresting account of his chase that morning after chamois. I scarcely listen to him—I am suffering too much; for, upon my word, I know no greater tragedy than not being allowed to talk about yourself. But I am bound to say that the young gentleman cures me, and that very cheaply. 'Honour the charge he made!' if I may slightly paraphrase the Balaclava lyric to his advantage.

MY FIRST ELEPHANT.

WHAT a to-do there was! What a packing and unpacking of everything! What confusion, what bustle! 'Boy' was echoing and re-echoing all over the place; not that that was anything out of the ordinary, however.

As I sit here now, in my long arm-chair, with my cheroot in my mouth and my B. and S. adjacent, I cannot help laughing as the whole thing comes as vividly to mind again as though it happened yesterday. I wonder the poor old 'Boy' didn't go mad; I believe he did go mad. He lost his head, that was certain. He packed those things which he ought not to have packed; he left unpacked those things which he ought to have packed. I discharged him, I fined him, I boxed his ears, I swore: anyone would have sworn. And then, when I had poured out the vials of my wrath and used such language as Rabelais used, still I was not happy.

I had not to catch a train; there was no cab waiting at the door; time was no object to me whatever; I had no irritating companion to constantly say, 'Come on, hurry up!' or anything of that sort. No, there was no apparent reason to the uninitiated for all this loss of temper, all this hurrying to and fro, all this babel and confusion worse confounded; and I imagine, looking back, that the poor old 'Boy' was not the only one that lost his head.

Well, well! I was but a youngster, and it was excusable. It was an epoch in my life, my first low-country trip. I had, of course, read the stirring tales of Mayne Reid and other authors who fire the youthful mind; I had gone much further, for I had listened to hundreds of tales told by the men themselves, the very heroes of big-game shooting. How I used to drink in every word! How I used to sit with my mouth wide open, my ears cocked, I verily believe, until my Peria Dore would say, 'Come, come, youngster, let us turn in.' So I turned in, to dream of the 'rogue,' of that *rara avis*, the 'tusker,' of the 'charge,' and of the wonderful tracking. But now, dreaming, listening, wondering were at an end; for I myself was going down to do combat with the giant of the forest. My mind was made up, my leave granted, and everything arranged—ammunition, tents, commissariat, and battery all packed.

It was for this, not merely to catch the 1.30 from Euston, or anything so humdrum as that, that all the hubbub was about.

The excitement of one's first elephant hunt begins with the packing. It never ends. Why I could almost kick the Boy now! When we finally got the things packed, everything was taken out of the bungalow, from saucepans upwards. The coolies moved off with their loads, each man carrying about 40 lbs. on his head; all marching off in single file, all chattering, and pouring out awful language. Everybody gets utterly demoralised over packing, even the 'mild Hindoo.'

The 'Boy' and the coolies were to get to Wellaway that night, and have dinner ready when I arrived. At Wellaway there was a Government rest-house, but, as the road was an unfrequented one, the rest-house was allowed to get in a very bad state of dilapidation, and was horribly dirty; and the man in charge is very aptly described in the same words. They were both very old, very dilapidated, and disgustingly dirty. Either from this reason or because it was so feverish there, few men stayed a night, preferring to push on to Tiloola, the next stage.

I had, however, arranged to meet my companion, a well-known Shikari, at Wellaway, and we were to stay there the first night.

Here it will be as well to say, perhaps, that this was all taking place in Ceylon. I was a coffee-planter, and at the time of which I write residing in the district of Haputalle, at an elevation of about 5,000 feet above sea level. From my bungalow verandah I looked right down on to the low country, a most wonderful panorama, a perfectly flat country stretching mile on mile, as far as the eye could see, right down to the sea, which could be seen in the far-off distance glittering on the horizon. Here and there, in this vast extent of country, might be noticed small green spots, shining little oases, in this vast track of jungle. These bright little spots were villages; the bright green, growing paddy (rice); and very few and far between they are. It is an almost uninhabited country, a country of which no one, except men who went down there shooting big game, knew anything whatever.

This was the home of the elephant; but, like all really intelligent animals, he was not always 'in' when called upon. We had, however, been careful about this, and had had word brought us that there was a herd of seven elephants not very far from Tamanaville.

I must mention what is generally not known, namely, that a 'tusker' is very rare in Ceylon. Though common enough in

India proper—which, metaphorically speaking, is a 'stone's throw' from Ceylon, and to which, of course, it at one time was joined—yet from some cause, something lacking in the food probably, the Ceylon elephants seldom grow tusks. Imagine the keen jealousy of anyone who gets news of a tusker. He hurriedly and mysteriously disappears in quest of it, keeping his greatest chum in ignorance as to where he is off to, or what he is going after. There is no one so jealously selfish as your 'sportsman' when it comes to a matter of this sort.

During a residence of some eighteen years in Ceylon, it has only been my good fortune to see three tuskers; it will, therefore, be easily understood how very anxious every sportsman is to shoot one. Where there is no tusk, what do you take as the trophy? I hear some one ask. Why, we take the tail; and, though not so handsome as a fox's brush, I can assure you it is thought much more of. It certainly is not what one would call a beautiful trophy; and to kill so huge, intelligent, and useful an animal simply for his miserable little tail does seem a shame. Yet, do you know, I believe an Englishman would be just as keen to shoot an elephant if it had no tail at all.

Now, after this digression, let us start again for Wellaway. It is now 3 P.M. and quite time I was off; so, shouting to Veemin, my horsekeeper, to bring round my horse, I am soon in the saddle. Veemin, running alongside, dashes up short cuts and gets ahead, and keeps ahead as only a Tamil horsekeeper can. For the horsekeeper always accompanies you in this way, invariably arriving at the journey's end first; meeting you on arrival and taking away the horse, cleaning and feeding it, before he gets anything himself. In this way a horsekeeper goes on an average thirty miles a day. Not a bad performance for a man, day after day, carrying a horse-rug and brushes with him too.

In due time I arrive at Wellaway, to find my friend already there, dinner ready, and everyone in good spirits. 'L.' and I have some shandy-gaff, and, settling ourselves into long arm-chairs (a decided luxury in this country), discuss matters.

The heat is intolerable, mosquitoes swarm, but this by no means abates my keenness, for 'L.' begins by telling me that his tracker's son reports the herd moving in the direction of Tiloola, which means only about twenty miles off, and that there are five very fine elephants in the herd, and two 'poonches' (young ones). All this is very exciting, and the twenty miles is a mere nothing to

me, merely the next street; and though mosquitoes may worry, and perspiration may pour, what of that? Having dined comfortably (for if proper arrangements are made, you can dine just as well in the heart of the densest jungle in the low country as on the top of a mountain in your own bungalow), we turned into our camp beds, which had been carefully put up in the verandah, and, carrying on a desultory conversation, finally dropped off to sleep. The coolies were all lying about in the back verandah, fast asleep—and how fast a coolie *does* sleep can only be realised by the person who has to awake him.

'Yendra! Yendra!' were the words which aroused me in the morning ('Get up! Get up!'). It was the Boy rousing the coolies, and sending them off to Tiloola. 'Twas 4 A.M. and a lovely starlit morning.

'Get tea ready by five o'clock, Boy,' mutters 'L.' as he turns over and goes to sleep again.

I toss about for a short time, and then get up; see the horsekeepers feed the horses, hurry the coolies off, and make myself generally obnoxious, until 'L.' can stand it no longer and has to get up too.

'Come along, tea is ready;' and, falling to, we are soon hard at work on ham and eggs and like delicacies, after which we feel fit for anything.

Mounting our horses, we ride along in the direction of Tiloola.

Trotting on, we overtake the coolies, and, telling our gun-bearers to run along with us, we go on for a mile or so. Then dismounting, the horses are handed over to the horsekeepers, who are told to wait until the coolies overtake them, when they are all to come along together.

Thus getting quietly away, with our gun-bearers, we are ready for anything which may cross the road.

We have not gone far before I get a shot at a jungle fowl. Then 'L.' gets two large pigeons (*maha batagoya*), a right and left. Then we tramp along for some time before anything is seen. Sh! Sh! a herd of deer pop across, five. Too far off to get a shot, however.

The heat has now become terrible, so we determine to sit down and wait for the horses to overtake us; sitting here we get three more pigeons, as they fly over the road. By the time coolies and horses arrive the heat is indescribable, and very glad we are to mount and ride slowly on.

Arriving at Tiloola, and telling the Boy to get everything unpacked, we go down to the river, close by, to bathe. Very pretty, very cool, and very jolly it is here. No wonder the old classical poets wrote of the 'grateful shade.' There is very little water in the river just now, as it is the dry season; but look at the high-water marks up on the trees there, thirty feet high, and you will get some idea of what it is in the wet season. 'Tis a mighty torrent then, when all the water from the mountains above comes pouring down. Now 'tis a mere rivulet, about three feet deep only, except in the pools, which are of all depths.

The leafy boughs, meeting overhead, make a perfect shade from the sun, and are alive with small parrots and green barbets. We stay down here, in this delightfully cool spot, for fully an hour, and then go up to breakfast, for it is now one o'clock. Breakfast over, we send for old 'Bohomo hondi,' 'L.'s' pet tracker, and, lying down on our camp-beds, enjoy a siesta, a thing generally done throughout the tropics during the middle of the day.

'Mahatmayia! Mahatmayia!' and I start up to see a weazened, shrunken old creature salaaming me. This old wanderoo, this skin and bone, is the wonderful old man whose tracking 'L.' is never tired of lauding to the skies. *This* is the old man I have heard so much of, is it?

Why, he must be an antediluvian! I put him down as a useless old fossil at once, and feel that, if left in that old man's hands, the whole trip is doomed to failure.

What a gross injustice I was doing this most extraordinary old chap remains to be seen.

The old man 'Bohomo hondi' says he is not quite sure where the herd is—that there is any herd at all, in fact. He hasn't seen it himself. His boys have given him the information, which, from time to time, he has forwarded to 'L.'

'And boys are boys, and I never rely on mine,' mumbles the old wretch.

Well, here is a pretty mess! I thought we had a herd waiting to be shot, and the whole thing is an invention of this 'Yakoos.' I am in an awful rage. 'L.' is what may be called mad, and the old chap gets some choice language let loose on him. He simply sits down on the edge of the verandah, and chews his betel with the greatest unconcern. Perhaps he didn't understand our Cinghalese?

We drank brandy and soda thirstily, and thoughtfully. My

time is up the day after to-morrow, so what has to be done must be done to-morrow, which leaves me a day to get back in.

'Isn't there a "solitary" about anywhere, Bohomo hondi?' asks 'L.' 'Ho! enawa, ratteri eci awa' ('Yes, yes, there was, one came last night'). So there was a solitary, or rogue elephant, close to the old man's village it seemed, and it had been out last night damaging their crops; but the old fossil hadn't thought of mentioning this, thinking we were bent on going after a herd, when we should probably have shot several elephants.

Now a 'solitary' is always a vicious old elephant, having been driven out of the herd by his fellows, who can stand his arrogance no longer, and no other herd will let him join them. He is an outcast and very wary, and therefore much more difficult to shoot. In the majority of cases very dangerous, as he haunts the neighbourhood of villages, breaking down plantains, cocoanuts, and doing no end of damage generally, and soon finds out what a terror he is, and begins to chase the people, seeing how afraid they are of him. A sportsman naturally prefers shooting him to any other (except a tusker), but 'L.' had not considered it safe for me to begin my first low-country trip with a 'solitary,' a herd being so much easier to manage, and so much more timid than an old rogue. This rogue was a well-known bad character, and 'L.' had several times been after him before, but without success. The arrangement was that Bohomo hondi should come first thing in the morning, at four o'clock, and, taking up the rogue's track, we would follow it up; and having thus settled matters, we sent the old chap off to his village close by.

Now began an animated discussion between 'L.' and me as to 'first shot.'

'Why, I understood I was to get first shot,' I said. 'Yes, but not at this rogue, which is an old elephant of mine. At the herd you were, but this is quite different.'

'No, it isn't; I don't see how it is your elephant because you let him go once. Besides, you promised me first shot.'

'I withdraw that promise.' And so on. Finally we agreed to toss up, much to 'L.'s' annoyance, I think. There is no one so jealous over these matters as your 'old shot.'

The rule is, to toss for first shot; but when an old hand takes a tyro up to his first elephant, of course the tyro gets the shot. Yet here was 'L.' just as jealous over this solitary as if he himself were a tyro. He had shot seventy elephants. He

did not at all like my insisting on tossing, as it gave him a chance of losing, which he didn't; he actually won.

I thought the least he could do would be to give his chance to me; but no, he stuck to it with that persistence peculiar to sportsmen. The fact was that this was a remarkably fine elephant, said to be fully nine feet high—a very big elephant for Ceylon; and 'L.' actually considered it as *his* elephant, having been after him once or twice before.

Having settled everything, we got our rifles out. Mine were a 577 xpress by Holland and Holland and a 500 xpress by Reilly, and, seeing everything in order, we strolled over to the tank.

The whole place was alive with wild fowl. A glorious sight, thousands upon thousands, from tiny little grebes to huge flamingoes; and the tank was covered with lotus in full flower. I do not think I have ever seen anything prettier than the Tiloola tank was that evening, the sun shining over the tree tops, which cast their shadows over the water. The trees were alive with birds—pigeons, barbets, parrots, and other birds too numerous to name. Yet not a shot could we fire, for fear of disturbing the rogue which we hoped was somewhere close by—at any rate the chances were that he was in hearing distance of a gun shot.

No, not a shot could we fire, and the tank swarming with teal, too. Wasn't it too bad?

Swash! what's that? Why, look! there goes a crock. Look how the birds all rise with one accord. The air is alive with them; as this awful-looking creature slowly glides along under the bank. What a fine crock he is, too! Quite sixteen feet, I should say. Yet we couldn't fire a shot.

The brute crept half out of the water and lay basking in the setting sun, and we couldn't fire at him. Wasn't it aggravating? 'Well, I shouldn't much like to retrieve a shot teal out of the tank,' said 'L.,' 'or send a coolie in to do so, with that fellow about.' 'Why, the tank is alive with them! Look there! There are two more! And look over yonder! What is that moving along so slowly, like a floating log?' But we know there is no current to move anything. What an enormous beast that is! It was aggravating not to be able to rid the world of some of these huge saurians, indescribably loathsome, useless, and certainly not ornamental. Evening is closing in, however, and here there is no twilight. At six o'clock, when the sun goes down, it becomes totally dark. So we give a loud coo-ee, and with a mighty splash

the crocks disappear, as though by magic, and the air once more becomes alive with birds, and the whole place resounds with their clamorous cries.

Wending our way back, we find dinner is almost ready. So we change into our pyjamahs for comfort and ease without dignity. *Otium sine dignitate* is the Ceylon sportsman's motto, and, unlike many, he actually practises what he preaches. Pyjamahs, however, were no protection from mosquitoes, which were simply awful, their size and numbers only outdone by their bloodthirstiness; for such small things their powers of imbibing are wonderful, and I wonder some *savant* has not 'explained' it. This is just the sort of thing they explain so well. They have told us that only the male bites, that mosquitoes are essentially vegetarians, and a few startling truths of that sort; but I should like to know how many quarts of blue blood a real vegetarian mosquito can manage to imbibe in twelve hours, and the result on the mosquito. These little pests being quite too awful, we had dinner in our camp beds, the Boy handing in a plate at a time, carefully raising the curtains as little as possible, and, before doing so, flogging the air with a towel.

In this manner we managed to get through dinner with at least merriment, the whirr and hum outside the curtain considerably adding to it—a noise like a dozen flights of bees on the wing. Very pleasant indeed *outside*. How thoroughly we enjoyed our smoke; and, talking away of other hunts in which he had participated, 'L.' whiled away the time until we dropped off to sleep.

'Nagahata, nagahata, Mahatmya' ('Get up, get up, master') were the first words I heard; and, rousing myself, I made out old Bohomo hondi's form.

'Twas quite dark and it was abominably early. The Boy was not even up. 'Boy! Boy!' Whizz! went a boot; whizz! went another. 'Sar!' yelled the Boy. 'Why,' I said, 'we wanted early tea, at four o'clock, and here it is broad daylight' ('twas as dark as pitch), 'no fire lighted, no water boiling, no toast ready: what does it all mean? 'Me speak Mootsamy, he no wake,' says the Boy, dashing out to lay hands on Mootsamy, the kitchen coolie; and presently we hear an uproar in the kitchen, in which the Boy's voice and Mootsamy's are blended, but not in unison.

Bohomo hondi says the 'rogue' was there last night, and Rang hami had fired a shot at him to frighten him away from his paddy: hadn't we heard the shot? Yes; now we came to think of

it, we thought we had—at about nine o'clock, but we were not positive, the mosquitoes had been humming so, we said. It appeared, on inquiry, that Rang hami's charge consisted of an old nail, and, of course, fired at a distance of a hundred yards or so. Most 'rogue' elephants carry a lot of old iron about with them obtained in that way—nails, stones, lumps of lead, &c. These things are fired into them by the villagers, watching their paddy by night. It is the most effectual way they have of frightening the solitaries away.

In one night an elephant will wreck the work of years, leaving nothing behind him but a mass of uprooted plantains, or broken-down cocoanut trees, a trampled paddy field, and a few fallen houses. A whole village probably consists of not more than half a dozen houses—the population, twenty to thirty people, all one family, dying out not gradually, but with most appalling rapidity. Starvation, fever, dysentery, dry seasons and consequent famine, resulting in utter want of energy, are most surely exterminating these people.

'Tea ready, sar!' at last says the Boy.

'Eat as much as you can,' says 'L.,' 'for there is no knowing when we shall get back.'

With such an uncertainty ahead we both tuck in heartily, and having thoroughly fortified the inner man for a long siege, get our rifles, and hand them over to our gunbearers. 'L.' takes one coolie with him, giving one rifle to Bohomo hondi. I take two, both, like myself, new to the sport—Vellian and Parpen—giving them a rifle each, with ammunition, and telling them not to speak a word on pain of instant death, or make the slightest sound. All coughing, sneezing, or blasphemy they want to indulge in, they must do *now*, and not later on. With a few warnings of this kind, which evidently begin to make them wish they hadn't come, off we start; time about five o'clock. Crossing the road, we go along the edge of the tank, which is very quiet compared to what it was last night, the numerous birds just awaking. At the far end of the tank Bohomo hondi stops, and points out the elephant's tracks. Yes, he had been down to the tank last night. There were his tracks all about in the soft mud. 'This is some hours old,' says Bohomo hondi. Getting into single file we push on, Bohomo hondi leading, then 'L.,' then myself, the three coolies, with very protruding eyes, bringing up the rear. They do not understand a word of Cinghalese, and, not knowing

what the old tracker had said, are fully under the impression that the elephant is close at hand. I see that it only requires a sudden movement of monkeys amongst the trees and the coolies will bolt. I therefore consider it wise to secure a rifle whilst I can. So taking my 577, and telling Vellian in a sepulchral whisper to keep close to me, and that if he runs away I will most certainly shoot him, I load both rifles, and hurry on and overtake 'L.' and Bohomo hondi. The tracks are fairly distinct, and I do not think much of the tracking difficult, so far. The jungle, too, is fairly open and walking comparatively easy. We must have been going on like this for more than an hour, the 'going' getting more and more difficult, until at the end of the second hour we were all creeping along with our bodies bent double, the jungle a mass of 'wait a bit' thorns, which stopped one at every step. The heat was awful; I could see nothing but 'L.'s' back. I should never be able to stand another hour of this. I felt that if I could only stand upright for ten minutes and be allowed to swear freely, I should get all right; but no, the old chap in front didn't show the slightest inclination to stop—on, on, on! Not a track could I see; and how an elephant could possibly have chosen such an abominable way I could not understand. His talked-of sagacity was all nonsense, that was certain.

Every now and again my hat would scrape against some branch, and then I would give a start and stop, for the noise thus made always gives one the idea that something in the jungle has moved. Whenever I did this, Vellian invariably gave me a job in the back with the barrels of the rifle he was carrying—loaded. This, of course, made me start round to see what he wanted, thinking he had touched me to attract my attention to something. Turning sharply round, I always found my face right in his, the expression of terror depicted on his countenance being quite indescribable. Off would go my hat, caught by some thorn; thump would come Vellian's loaded rifle right in the small of my back. Swish! would go my hat against something. 'What's that?' would be the unuttered exclamation, quickly turning round, to find Vellian's nose in my mouth.

Oh, I would have given anything to swear! Never, till then, did I realise that swearing was really necessary. It is a safety-valve, and should be allowed to go off when steam gets beyond a certain point.

It must be ten or eleven o'clock. We have crawled ten or twelve

miles. I can't go on much longer. Heat!—why, perspiration was pouring out of us; our clothes were wringing wet; the only thing that did not look as if it was dying was the old chap in front. He had not turned a hair, and his tracking now was wonderful indeed. Not a sign, or track, or broken branch, or anything, could I see; but on he went—slowly, because locomotion had to be slow in such stuff, but with most wonderful certainty, as though he actually saw the elephant itself ahead of him. So we went on and on, from bad to worse, for another two hours or so, and then he suddenly stopped. I ran into 'L.' Vellian, of course, dashed the rifle into the same hole which he had almost jobbed right through me by this time. No one could see, and any stoppage in front meant a collision along the whole line.

For hours I had been carrying a 10-pound rifle. I had realised the earnestness of life. I had made up my mind that, once through with my first elephant, the rest were safe. Never, no never!—not for the finest tusker—would I again go through all the agony I had been enduring since six o'clock.

Yes, my mind was fully made up—this was my first and *last* elephant. I had thought of nothing but this determination for hours, when this sudden stoppage took place.

'What is up? Is he there?' was the expression on every face. All my keenness was back. I felt equal to anything.

'L.' and Bohomo hondi hold a whispered confab., and I almost kill myself in my efforts to hear what it is all about. Not a word can I make out. The excitement is intense—quite too awful. Then the old man disappears in the undergrowth, gliding away without the slightest sound, like a snake, going away without the least effort, the undergrowth closing behind him, leaving not a sign of him.

Crawling up to 'L.', I whisper, 'What is it?'

'Sh! sh!' says 'L.'

Now, my whisper had hardly been a whisper—I had *looked* it more than anything—and to be met with a scowl and 'Sh! sh!' was fearfully irritating. 'L.' then went on to whisper something, but what on earth he said I couldn't make out, for just then my hat brushed against a tree, deadening all other sounds. Having recovered this shock, I again looked 'What is it?' Thump came something into the small of my back, and, glaring round, I see my faithful Vellian, also looking 'What is it?' He, too, had crept up, terror depicted all over him. At this moment the

ludicrousness of the whole thing burst upon me. I couldn't help laughing. Seizing my handkerchief, I stuffed it into my mouth. Stop laughing I couldn't. The agonised expression on 'L.'s' face was terrible. Throwing myself on the ground, I buried my face in my arms; but whenever I looked up and saw the perspiring faces, protruding eyes, and weebegone appearance of the coolies, and the intense anxiety depicted on 'L.'s' face lest my giggling should be heard, off I went again and again into paroxysm after paroxysm of laughter. Looking up, however, on one of these occasions, I saw Bohomo hondi, who had returned as quietly as he had gone, staring at me with the utmost contempt and rage. I saw the old chap had lost all respect for me, and this stopped my giggling fit. One must maintain one's dignity even in a cane brake.

'The rogue was close here, had been lying down, but seemed restless and had got up and gone on,' said the old chap in a whisper—evidently implying that I was the cause.

'What do you propose?' said 'L.'

'I think I know where he is going, and we must make a detour and cut him off. He has gone to the river,' said Bohomo hondi.

'That is just as well,' said 'L.,' 'for I wouldn't go near him in this jungle.'

'Ne, ne,' mumbled the old man. (No, no, nor he either—that was very certain.)

We now turned to our right, and after some time, in the same sort of going we had been having so much of, struck a ridge with a very decent game-track on it. Here one could walk upright and in comparative comfort. The jungle got more open as we went along, and presently we struck on an old abandoned paddy-field—not a house to be seen, everything growing up into jungle.

'The people are all dead—fever,' said the old man, with the greatest unconcern. And I wondered how many villages he had seen thus quietly pass away.

From his age, which might have been centuries, but more from his utter unconcern, I came to the conclusion that he must have seen many. He seemed to think nothing whatever of it.

Crossing this weebegone and forlorn village, we stopped, and the old man said he would go and reconnoitre, and see if the 'rogue' hadn't stopped at the old tank here before going on as far as the river. The tank in all probability was dry, but still might have a little water in it, sufficient to tempt the elephant

down, he thought—so off he went to see, we sitting down meantime.

‘The tank is just here; the old man won’t be more than five minutes,’ whispered ‘L.’

Visions of water—cool, refreshing water—flitted before me, when, ‘Enawa Mahatmya,’ the old man was back. The rogue was there. He was down in the tank, and seemed very restless—we had better come quickly. Taking up a handful of sand, the old chap, holding his hand aloft, let it slowly pour away, observing most carefully which way the wind carried it. To me, uninitiated, there did not appear to be a breath of wind; but he made up his mind at once that we must go round. Trudging off, we once more crossed the abandoned paddy-field, and, entering the jungle, crept stealthily along.

Presently I heard something. It was not my confounded hat this time, but most surely a breaking branch. Yes, there goes another. The rogue had left the tank, then—he *was* restless.

How my heart throbbed against my ribs! There, at last, was the rogue. Staring into the jungle I could see nothing, but from the noise I knew he must be quite close.

Ah! Bohomo hondi points at something. ‘L.’ stoops, nods, and, turning round, beckons to me, his perspiring face beaming with delight. He points into the jungle, and, though I strain my eyes in that direction until they nearly drop out of my head, I can make out nothing.

How I did stare! I could see nothing—nothing whatever—nothing but jungle.

Suddenly something caught my eye. Good heavens! ’tis the rogue’s tail—here, within fifteen feet. I had all this time mistaken his huge form for a rock; I had no idea we were so close as that.

Yes, there he was—he evidently did not know we were there—there he was, slowly shaking one leg to and fro, and, with his ears cocked, keenly watching the path he had himself just come along. Yes, there was no doubt about it, he had either scented or heard us, and was now lying in wait to make a charge.

By Jove! how lucky it was he hadn’t done that in the fearful stuff we had crept through earlier in the day. We could never have escaped.

‘L.’ slowly, with his rifle clutched in his hand, creeps, inch by inch, nearer to the rogue.

He gets to within ten feet of him. The rogue stops shaking his leg to and fro, and suddenly wheels right round on 'L.'

'L.'s rifle is raised. Bang! bang!

There is a screaming trumpet, a swaying of trees in all directions, and the rogue has gone. 'Come on!' shouts 'L.'

Off we dash, tearing our way through the jungle, and the jungle tearing its way through us. The whole place is covered with blood, and there can be no doubt that the elephant is badly wounded.

'Sh! look out!' Bohomo hondi stops, and beckons me. I creep up to him, for 'tis my turn now. Oh, yes, there he is, looking straight at me, about twenty feet off.

'Look out, he's going to charge! Wait until he gets quite close; I'll back you up,' whispers 'L.'

Whrrrrrr! here he comes, everything falling in all directions. The noise of his trumpet, the swaying of the trees, the crashing, and then the awful 'thud'—who can describe them?

'Well done, old man. You stood that charge like a veteran.'

Yes, I had got my first elephant. How? Well, even now, after all this description, I hardly know what happened. He had charged right on to me and I had dropped him with my first shot. That was quite certain, for there he was; his huge carcass only seven feet from where I stood. 'Twas more luck than good management; had the bullet not killed him instantaneously he must have crushed me in his fall.

Where were the coolies? They were conspicuously absent. There was my other rifle, lying on the ground, but not a coolie to be seen.

The intrepid Vellian had not been able to stand that charge, and 'seeing Parpen get up a tree, why, he did so too.'

It was a magnificent elephant, fully nine feet. 'L.'s two bullets had penetrated a little too far back to be fatal. The shot he got was a difficult one—the suddenness of the elephant's swerve round putting him off, or possibly the bullet may have glanced off a sapling. 'Twas very seldom he let an elephant go. This old rogue, however, had foiled him several times.

Old Bohomo hondi meantime has taken off the tail, which he hands to me with great politeness, and I see I am once more installed in the old man's good graces, from the manner in which I shot my first elephant.

THE COUNTESS RADNA.

BY W. E. NORRIS,

AUTHOR OF 'MATRIMONY,' 'HEAPS OF MONEY,' ETC.

CHAPTER XLIV.

SANITY AND LUNACY.

It had been arranged that Frank Innes should dine, that evening, with the Countess and his betrothed; and at the appointed hour he arrived, to find only one of these ladies seated beside the crackling wood-fire, into which she was gazing, while she held a thin, white hand up to the blaze. She did not turn her head as he drew near, or she would have noticed that he was looking somewhat perturbed; he also might have been struck by the despondency expressed in her attitude, had not his attention been otherwise engaged.

'I say,' he began, before she could speak, 'I'm afraid there's going to be more bother about this business than we thought for. I've been to the Chancery and seen Lindsay, who is left in charge just now, and he scouts the idea of a marriage without full publicity. He says we couldn't possibly carry such a thing through unless we perjured ourselves—and most likely not then. What is to be done?'

The Countess shrugged her shoulders slightly. 'I have no suggestion to offer,' she replied; 'the control of events has been taken out of my hands, as I will explain to you presently, and I can't tell you what to do. But if it will give you any satisfaction to hear what you ought *not* to have done, I can easily tell you that. In the first place, you ought not to have taken Mr. Lindsay into your confidence.'

'But I didn't! I had to make inquiries of somebody, you know, and I mentioned no names. Of course I had to tell him that the lady was a minor, because that was one of the first things that he asked.'

'Mr. Lindsay is an inquisitive young man. With the clue that you have given him he will soon find out all that he wants to

know, and you may be sure that he will not keep such a good story to himself. That, however, concerns Lord and Lady Burcote more than it does you or me, and perhaps, as you say, it was necessary to consult somebody. But it certainly was not necessary that you should reveal your plans to the Marchese di Leonforte—of all people in the world!

‘Leonforte? Why I thought it was you who had told him! I only saw him for a minute or two at the railway-station, and I can’t remember exactly what passed; but I am sure he gave me to understand that he had heard all about it from you.’

‘He deceived you, then; and I think, if I were in your place, I should feel that I had a score to settle with that man; for he has played you a shabby trick. He must have gone and given information immediately after you left; because Lord Burcote called here this afternoon to demand the restitution of his daughter, and his daughter appears to have felt that the legal position of the petitioner was unassailable. At all events she made no resistance.’

Frank dropped down upon a chair, opening his eyes wide in consternation. ‘Do you mean to say that Florry has gone?’ he ejaculated.

‘Oh, yes; she has gone. Her father insisted, and, as I tell you, she didn’t resist.’

‘And you let her go!’

‘Am I a female brigand or a sorceress, to detain people under my roof, whether they will or no? I used such poor powers of persuasion as I possess; I tried to make the girl see that she might exact rather better terms from her father than he chose to offer her; but I might as well have held my tongue. She left a message for you: I was to say that she couldn’t help abandoning you this time, but that she would never marry anybody else. No doubt she spoke sincerely.’

There was a pause of a few seconds; after which Frank sighed and remarked, ‘Ah, well! I never did feel much confidence in the success of this scheme of yours, you know. You meant kindly, and I’m awfully obliged to you for—for all that you’ve done for me; but—’

‘But you would have been still more obliged if I had had sense enough to mind my own business?’

‘Oh, no; I don’t say that. Of course I’m sorry, and of course I wish we hadn’t attempted impossibilities; because, for one

thing, I'm afraid poor Florry will have a bad time of it with her mother——'

'Her mother,' interrupted the Countess, 'is not to be told. That is, she will not be told by her husband or her daughter, who seem to be quite as much afraid of the woman as you are! It is true that Mr. Lindsay or some of his friends may see fit to enlighten her.'

'Oh, Lindsay is a good chap; he won't split,' answered Frank confidently. 'Well, it's a great relief to hear that old Burcote doesn't mean to betray us. And, after all,' he added presently, 'it's only a case of "As you were!" Indeed, it's better than that; for I'm sure Florry will break off her engagement to Galashiels now.'

'So that a sensation of relief, everything considered, is what you actually experience,' observed the Countess. 'I congratulate you upon your philosophy, though I can't pretend to be educated up to the point of admiring it. You English have no blood in your veins; you talk about being in love, but you don't really understand the meaning of the word. Courage you may have—one can't deny you that, because you have so often shown that you know how to fight—only it isn't the sort of courage to make any one enthusiastic about you. Wasn't it Napoleon who said that you didn't know when you were beaten? He never could have said that if he had had to deal with you in a social, instead of a military, capacity! As for me, I have done with you. I can't help people who won't help themselves, and it is some comfort to know that neither your appetite nor your sleep will be interfered with by any mishaps that may fall to your lot.'

'But what would you have me do?' asked Frank, reasonably enough.

'I have told you already that I have no suggestion to offer. You recognise the force of facts, and so does Lady Florence—*je vous en fais mon compliment!* Personally, I should have liked you better if you had been a little more agitated; but that is a mere question of personal taste. Shall we go and eat our dinner now? I am happy to think that I may offer that humble suggestion without any fear of scandalising you.'

It must be confessed that Frank's agitation did not deprive him of all capacity for swallowing food; yet in the course of the next two hours he did manage to convince the irate Countess that he was less insensible than she had accused him of being. Her

anger, indeed, was to some extent a cloak for self-censure ; she could not but be conscious of his magnanimity in abstaining from the utterance of a word of reproach against her, and she had to acknowledge a certain grandeur in his quiet determination to go on hoping while he worked for his living.

‘All that is very pretty and very praiseworthy,’ she said at length ; ‘but I can’t sympathise with you, because you are patient and because I am impatient. When all is said, you are not to blame for having been born an inhabitant of a very chilly island. So, then, you propose to go quietly off to Milan, as if nothing had happened, to cultivate your voice and to trust to the powers above to befriend you at the proper moment ?’

‘Yes, I think so,’ answered Frank. ‘You see, I could do no good by returning to England, and Douglas would want to know what I meant by it, if I did. In spite of what you say and hint, I believe Florry will remain true to me : I shouldn’t help her, and I might get her into trouble, by attempting to see her again just now.’

‘You speak like the juvenile Solomon that you are : may you reap the just reward of your moderation in due season ! One doesn’t quite understand you ; but one is able, with a slight effort, to esteem you.’

After he had bidden her farewell she said to herself, ‘I shall leave him a fortune : that will be his only chance ; and if the girl is worth anything and keeps her word, he ought to win with it. Because, even supposing that this story doesn’t leak out, her value in the marriage-market will be a good deal depreciated by her rupture with the manufacturing lord, and Lady Burcote will think twice before turning her back upon a commoner as rich as Frank will be. So I shall accomplish my unique good deed, in spite of all, though I shall not witness the accomplishment of it. The misfortune is that Schott may keep me alive for several years yet.’

But that was not Dr. Schott’s belief or expectation. Excitement and disappointment had made his patient feverish, and she passed such a bad night that he would not let her leave her bed on the following morning. Although no explanation of Lady Florence Carey’s sudden arrival and equally sudden departure had been vouchsafed to him, he was not in much doubt as to what had occurred ; but, true to his recently adopted system, he abstained from remonstrance or dictation, merely remarking that he sup-

posed the Countess had now no special reason for lingering in the north of Europe.

'I have no special reason for hurrying to the south,' she answered rather pettishly. 'That is, unless it is true, as I think I have heard, that consumptive people die more easily in warm than in cold climates. Is that the case?'

The Doctor's guttural responsive laugh and gruff assertion that when he took people to the south it was to cure them, not to kill them, did not deceive her. The worthy, heavy-handed man meant well, but he was no adept in the art of deception. So, then, she was to die, and to die soon. Dr. Schott knew it, and she herself knew it, and there was nothing to grumble about, since she had made up her mind that this world had no attractions left for her. Nevertheless, it seemed hard. Probably it always does seem hard; although statistics show that suicides are upon the increase. The Countess, as she lay in bed, thinking of many things, was conscious of a clinging to existence which distressed and irritated her. She was not afraid of death, which is the universal destiny, and which no one, except a superstitious coward, ought to dread; her disappearance from earthly scenes would, she presumed, entail no suffering upon her, while it would be productive of substantial advantages to others. Consequently, her reluctance to disappear must be due to some lingering and perfectly absurd hope of earthly happiness. It was when she arrived at that logical conclusion that she found it impossible to lie in bed any longer and rang for her maid.

She was sitting in her boudoir, a few hours later, doing nothing at all and wishing that somebody—no matter who—would come and talk to her, when her major-domo brought her a card, upon which was inscribed the name of the Marchese di Leonforte. The gentleman, she was told, had been informed that the Countess was unwell, but had persisted, notwithstanding that intimation, in requesting admittance, and she granted his request with alacrity.

'By all means bring him in,' said she; and she added, under her breath, 'Perhaps he will wish, before he goes away, that I had not been so complaisant.'

Leonforte stalked into the room with a gloomy, tragic air at which she did not refuse herself the satisfaction of laughing aloud.

'I thought,' said she, 'that I was never to see your face again.'

Wasn't that the punishment with which you threatened me when you made your last impressive exit? But perhaps you feel capable of pardoning me now that you have achieved such a chivalrous victory over me, and perhaps you have come to enjoy your triumph. Is that it?'

'Madame,' replied Leonforte, 'the last time that I had the honour of visiting you, you called me an uncivilised Italian bully.'

'*Parfaitement.* I remember using the words, and I regret to add that nothing has occurred since then to make me alter my opinion. Won't you sit down? I haven't altered my opinion; still I confess that your recent conduct has revealed you to me in a rather new light. Perhaps I ought to have known that all bullies are mean; but, somehow or other, I did not imagine that you were mean enough to stab a man who had never injured you in the back, in order to avenge yourself upon a woman whom you had insulted. All this, however, helps to make you a fascinating study. What more can I do to draw you out, I wonder? Would it please you to hear that you have enraged me by foiling me? I make you welcome to that information.'

The Marchese was white with anger; but he controlled his wrath and his voice. 'I do not think it is true that I ever insulted you, Madame la Comtesse,' he replied. 'It is certainly true that you insulted me, and if I have enraged you by defeating your plans, I am not sorry for it. That, in truth, was what I hoped to do. But you are mistaken in thinking that I have come to Paris to enjoy the spectacle of your discomfiture.'

'Am I? Well, it is only fair to admit that you do not look as if you were enjoying yourself. What has procured me this unexpected pleasure, then? Couldn't you live without seeing me?'

'Ah,' exclaimed the Italian, wincing, as if he had received a physical wound, 'you are brutal!' He paused for a moment, and then continued: 'Listen, Madame la Comtesse; I do not know whether I love you or whether I hate you; I see by your eyes that you think I love you still, and it may be that you are right—I do not know! But this I know, that if I can inflict any pain upon you, in return for all the pain that you have given me, I will inflict it joyfully. All through these long months I have been thinking and thinking—it is possible that I am quite wrong; for you have been false with me from the very beginning—but the conclusion to which I have come at last is that, if you love anybody in the world, you love your husband.'

‘Oh, that is the conclusion to which you have come?’ said the Countess composedly. ‘*Après ?*’

He scrutinised her pale face keenly; but could detect no symptom of emotion there. ‘Your husband,’ he resumed, ‘does not love you, and he does love that Miss Rowley of whom, I think, you used only to pretend to be jealous. I know that he loves her, because I surprised them together one evening in England not long ago, and what I saw left no room for doubt. Ah,’ he cried exultantly, as a sudden flush overspread the Countess’s cheeks, ‘I was not wrong, then! You do love him, and I am avenged!’

‘We are not at the Porte Saint-Martin,’ remarked the Countess, whose discomposure had been only momentary. ‘That speech might have been effective if it had been addressed to an audience of several hundreds; but upon the ears of a single listener it falls a little flat. For the rest, it would be cruel to grudge you your revenge—such as it is. It would be more complete and more satisfactory to you, no doubt, if I did not happen to be dying; but, if you care to consult my doctor, he will tell you that I am not far off death; and, since that is so, my husband’s *affaires de cœur* cannot affect me very profoundly. Let it be admitted that I love him and that, as you say, I only pretended to be jealous of Miss Rowley: what does all that matter now?’

Leonforte was horrorstruck. ‘Dying!’ he exclaimed—‘oh, no, not *dying*! You do not mean what you say!—it is impossible!’

‘It is the truth. I have no longer any illusion upon the subject, and what you have just been kind enough to tell me has helped to reconcile me to my fate. So, if you consider that you have paid me out, we may part friends, after all.’

It is always a hard matter to tell what influence any given incident or announcement may exercise upon so curiously complex a being as an educated Italian of the present day. Leonforte, one would have thought, ought not to have cared very much whether a woman who had treated him as the Countess Radna had done lived or died; but he did care. Gazing earnestly at her, he saw in her clear, transparent complexion, her wasted fingers and her sunken eyes, with the dark semi-circles beneath them, the confirmation of what she had stated to be the truth, and, seeing this, he was overwhelmed by a rush of sorrow and remorse. He fell upon his knees beside her and poured forth incoherent entreaties for pardon, accompanied by proposals which, to tell the truth,

were extravagant enough to justify the smile with which she listened to them. He had been mad—so he averred—to imagine that he could hate her; he adored her, and his adoration was so disinterested that he was ready to do anything on earth that she might command him to do, rather than let her succumb to a broken heart. He would hurry back to England; he would see Mr. Colborne; he would explain to the man how matters stood; he would drag him over to Paris, and all would yet be well. Because it was inconceivable that any human being could really prize Miss Rowley's affection above that of one so immeasurably her superior.

When he had calmed down a little the Countess said: 'I won't laugh at you; I have had an overdose of sanity lately, and my heart goes out to anyone who is emotional enough to talk like a lunatic. Still, it remains true that lunacy can accomplish nothing, and that all the emotion in the world will not soften hard facts. One hard fact is that my husband will hear of my death with some decent regret and with a good deal of inward relief: another is that by this time next year—or shall we say two years hence?—I shall have become a somewhat painful memory to you. *Allons!* Let us not quarrel with the Creator of our race, who, it must be assumed, had reasons for making us what we are. A pretty sort of existence we should lead if love were eternal, or if we were in sober reality as unselfish as we affect to be. All is for the best in the best sort of world that could have been constructed to hold us, and nothing that happens upon the surface of it is of supreme consequence. Nevertheless, I offer you my apologies. I have had little consideration for you, and I have goaded you into exhibiting yourself as—well, as not precisely a *preux chevalier*. We will shake hands and forgive one another before we say farewell for ever, *n'est-ce pas?*'

After a time he complied with her request; perhaps also by this time he has fulfilled her prediction respecting him; for nothing can be more sadly certain than that love is not eternal and that bygone sufferings are unpleasant to look back upon. He remained in Paris and called repeatedly to inquire after the Countess's health at her door; but he was never again admitted into her presence, nor was any prominent place assigned to him in her thoughts. There had been so many like him, or almost like him! And none of them had come to a tragic end.

' CHAPTER XLV.

LOO COLBORNE'S LETTER.

'WELL, my dear girl,' remarked Lord Burcote to his daughter, with whom he had been temperately but fruitlessly reasoning during their railway journey from Dover to London, 'all I can say is I shouldn't care to be in your shoes! I've done the best I could for you; I don't want to bully you, and if you insist upon breaking off your engagement, I sha'n't scold you—though I think it is a thousand pities. But don't you flatter yourself that your mother will let you off so easily as that!'

'Oh, I know I shall catch it,' answered poor Lady Florence dolefully; 'there's no help for that. But she need never hear why I went to Paris, need she?'

'She won't hear it from me; but I'm afraid she will from you, unless you keep a pretty careful watch over your lips. The whole thing looks so confoundedly suspicious, don't you see! It will be easy enough to trump up some explanation of your having cut short your visit; but why the deuce you should have changed your mind about Galashiels all of a sudden—that's what your mother will want to know; and unless she gets some sort of a satisfactory reply——'

'But no sort of reply could be satisfactory to her,' observed Lady Florence pertinently.

'H'm!—well, no; I suppose not.'

For some moments Lord Burcote pensively studied the pages of the 'Field,' which he had just purchased; but probably it was not the perusal of the sporting intelligence that caused him to look up presently and say, with an air of calm decision, 'I shall go to Newmarket.'

'Oh, *how* I wish you would take me with you!' sighed the girl.

Lord Burcote grunted and retired behind his newspaper once more, so absurd an aspiration as that requiring no articulate response. Never in his life had he dreamt of taking a daughter of his to Newmarket, except on the occasion of some important race-meeting, and never had a daughter of his dreamt of requesting him to do so. It has already been intimated that his lordship

was not a man of domestic habits. But now he began to ask himself whether precedent might not be departed from for this once. It seemed rather too bad to run away from the impending storm and leave this poor little defenceless girl to bear the whole brunt of it; Lady Burcote, he knew, would have people staying in the house for some time to come, and would therefore be unable to leave home; angry letters might be endured with equanimity, and if a respite is not quite the same thing as a reprieve, it is at least better than nothing. The outcome of these cogitations was that he laid down the 'Field' at length and said:

'Look here, Florry; I'll tell you what I'll do with you, if you like. We won't go home at all; we'll stop in London to-night and run down to Newmarket together to-morrow; and then you can fire your shot from a distance. This is very good of me, you know, Florry.'

'I should rather think it was!' exclaimed his grateful daughter; and Lord Burcote was promptly rewarded by an embrace which it is to be feared he did not appreciate quite as highly as some other people might have done.

'Don't choke me,' he gasped; 'and for the love of Heaven, don't begin to cry! Now, Florry, if you don't stop crying at once, I'll send you straight home—I will indeed! You will have plenty of excuses for weeping later on, you may depend upon it; for the time being, we had better keep as cheerful as we can.'

It is pleasant to be able to cite an instance of genuine kindness and courage on the part of this anything but exemplary old nobleman. Having taken his erring daughter under his protection, he did protect her to the utmost of his ability; during several weeks he shielded her from the just and dire wrath of a lady who clamoured daily, through the post, to get at her; he likewise stood between her and Lord Galashiels, who journeyed down to Newmarket from Scotland, in a towering rage, to speak his mind. But neither Lord Burcote nor anybody else could do more than retard the progress of limping Nemesis, and Lady Florence, as she had anticipated, 'caught it' in the long run.

Perhaps she deserved to catch it; perhaps her conduct, if not quite so infamous as her mother averred, had been of a nature to merit a few of the epithets which were hurled at her. For indeed, as things fell out, the affair proved a most unfortunate one, and the worst of it was that it was published abroad. Somebody—possibly Mr. Lindsay—must have been indiscreet; everything

became known; the news flew from mouth to mouth with astonishing rapidity; and Lord Galashiels, so far from accepting his dismissal, indignantly claimed his release.

'You have ruined yourself hopelessly and irretrievably!' was Lady Burcote's greeting to her daughter when, after many delays, the delinquent was at length brought home. 'The only thing that you can do now is to enter some hospital as a sick-nurse and never be heard of again.'

Lady Florence made the best retort that could have been made to this and to similar gibes by qualifying herself for admission into a hospital in another capacity. She had no business whatsoever to fall ill, when there was nothing except fright and vexation the matter with her; but ill she became, and the doctor had to be sent for, and the wretched man prescribed tonics and rest and change of air. As if she had not had more change of air than was good for her already! Lord Burcote, however, felt strong enough to insist upon obedience to medical orders; so the culprit was packed off on a visit to an invalid aunt of hers who dwelt on the southern side of the Isle of Wight, thus, through no merit of her own, being delivered from purgatory.

Meanwhile, the whole county, not to say the whole country, was discussing her adventure with the keenest interest; and, amongst others, Mrs. Colborne, who had returned to Stoke Leighton to take care of her son, had a good deal to say upon the subject. Mrs. Colborne was of opinion that H  l  ne's behaviour had been simply outrageous, and she did not refuse herself the pleasure of expressing her opinion.

'One wouldn't so much mind,' she said, 'if one didn't feel that it has all been done on purpose.'

'Has anyone suggested that it was done by mistake?' asked Douglas.

'You know what I mean: it has been done on purpose to vex and embarrass you. She couldn't have had any other motive.'

'But why should I be vexed and embarrassed? I am neither the one nor the other; and I remember that there was a time, not so very long ago, when you couldn't find words strong enough to express your admiration for H  l  ne's disinterested kindness to Frank.'

'That was before all these distressing complications had arisen. Naturally, I wanted to think as well as I possibly could of my son's wife; I don't think you ought to reproach me for that. I

never liked your marriage and never wished for it, Heaven knows !'

The marriage for which Mrs. Colborne had avowedly wished would doubtless have been a more suitable one, and she was perhaps entitled to grumble a little over the present unsatisfactory state of affairs. At all events, Douglas did not grudge her that solace, nor was he so unkind as to remind her that another marriage upon which she had set her heart had been rendered possible only through the very substantial aid contributed thereto by her daughter-in-law. Mrs. Colborne was, and knew herself to be, such a thoroughly good and well-meaning woman that her conscience seldom gave her any trouble.

Probably she meant well, (though it is quite impossible to say what good object she can have had in view), by blowing Peggy Rowley's trumpet as loudly and persistently as she did at this time. Peggy was entertaining a large circle of guests—important and influential guests, including a bachelor baronet, well known in the political world, and a widowed viscount of the highest personal character and social standing. Both of them, it was rumoured, were paying their addresses to her, and it was extremely likely, Mrs. Colborne said, that she would end by accepting one or other of them. There was no reason why she shouldn't; indeed, there was every reason why she should, except—and here Mrs. Colborne would interrupt herself with a deep sigh.

From motives which will be understood, Douglas excused himself from accompanying his mother and his sister in their frequent visits to Swinford Manor, declining also two invitations to dine at that hospitable mansion. At the bottom of his heart he thought Peggy might have spared him those invitations. She had told him frankly that she had been more or less compromised by his society: did she want to convince him now that that inconvenience was a thing of the past? Or was it her viscount or her baronet whom she desired to convince? In either case, he preferred to remain at home, and we may be sure that he received a full and particular account of all Peggy's sayings and doings from Loo, whose indiscretion knew no bounds.

'My dear girl,' Douglas said to her at length, (for in speaking to Loo it was permissible to make use of plainer language than could have been safely addressed to his mother), 'there really is not the least necessity to keep on telling me what an idiot I have

been. If I could begin my life over again, I shouldn't be situated as I am; but Providence, in its inscrutable wisdom, usually refuses to let us profit by the lessons of experience. I don't wonder at your wishing that I had married Peggy Rowley; but, as I didn't, and as I can't, the only thing left for me to do is to look pleasant and buy her the prettiest wedding-present that I can afford.'

'You would if you could, then?' asked Loo eagerly.

'I didn't say so; it would have been very silly and slightly immoral of me to say so. I only want you to realise that all these tacit rebukes of yours are, to say the least of them, superfluous.'

Loo, being a good deal more in awe of her brother than she was of Peggy Rowley, held her peace in the presence of the former, but faithfully reported his observations to the latter, who did not forbid her to take such liberties. Peggy, of course, only laughed; still it seemed possible that something so nearly resembling an avowal might lead her to pause before accepting either of the eligible candidates for her hand, and to produce that effect upon her was her informant's object. Loo Colborne was one of those perfectly unselfish beings who are the salt of the earth and whose virtue must be its own reward, since it is never by any chance recognised; yet so queer is the mixture of good and evil which constitutes our mortal nature that she actually exclaimed to herself, one evening, after she had said her prayers and was about to get into bed, 'If only *Hélène* would die!'

The very next morning a letter was brought to her which, it is but fair to say, filled her with the most poignant grief and remorse. If all our hastily muttered wishes could be gratified, some, though perhaps not all, of us might feel as sorry and as ashamed as Loo did when she read the following lines, written in a trembling hand which she did not at first recognise as that of one from whom she had had many previous epistles.

'I am so ill,' the Countess Radna wrote, 'that I can never be well again, and it is doubtful whether I shall ever leave my bed again. I wish to see Douglas once more before I die. Will you ask him to come to me? And will you tell him that, if he comes, he will find me a much more reasonable and much less disagreeable person than I was when he saw me last? There are a few things that I should like to say to him; but they are not unpleasant things, and I will make no scene. Tell him that I was angry once and that I am not in the least angry now. When one

is at the point of death everything looks different. I am too tired to explain, and you would not understand if I did; only you will understand quite well when your own time comes. I wonder whether you will cry or whether you will jump for joy when this news reaches you! Most likely you will do both; for you are a dear, good little girl, and you deserve the best of husbands. Whoever or whatever he may be, you are sure to think him the best of husbands, and I daresay that the most sensible clause in the long will which I executed the other day is that which will give you a little money to start housekeeping upon.'

Neither the conclusion nor the preceding portion of the Countess's letter caused Loo to jump for joy; but she did weep copiously, and she lost no time in complying with her correspondent's request.

'Oh, Douglas,' she sobbed, after her brother had rapidly run his eye over the sheet of note-paper which she handed to him, 'how dreadful it is! If I had only known that she was ill I would never have been such a brute! You *will* go to her, won't you?'

'Of course I shall go,' answered Douglas rather brusquely. 'There's an up train at eleven o'clock. If you will tell my mother and beg her to excuse me for not saying goodbye to her, you will do me a real kindness. I may be absent for some time, and there are matters of business which must be attended to before I start. Do you see?'

'Yes, I see, and I'll manage so that you shall not be bothered,' answered Loo, who in truth was not so dull but that she could understand his meaning and his feelings. Her mother, she knew, would catechise him, sympathise with him, perhaps even offer to go to Paris with him; whereas it was evident that he wished to be left alone and that to leave him alone was the one and only thing that could be done for him.

So Mrs. Colborne was provisionally informed of nothing more than that the Right Honourable gentleman would have to go up to town that morning to transact public business—which was strictly true. It would be time enough to make further revelations later in the day, Loo thought.

Well was it for Douglas that public affairs really did claim all the attention that he could give to them until the hour of his departure from Charing Cross; but when once he had seated himself in the train, the consideration of private affairs could no longer be postponed, and the more he considered them the more

sad and despondent he became. All day long he had been cherishing a half-acknowledged hope that matters were less serious than they had been represented and that he would reach his journey's end only to be laughed at by Dr. Schott; but now, while the express rushed southwards through the night, and while by the light of his reading-lamp he perused again and again the ill-written lines which his sister had handed over to him, his heart sank. It might not be true—he trusted it was not—that *Hélène* was dying; but it was certain that she thought so, and certain also that she must be dangerously ill. Nothing else would ever have induced her to make that appeal.

Now, Douglas Colborne was a straightforward, clear-headed man, and the gnawing remorse which kept him broad awake all that long night through was not due to any misgivings as to the course which he had adopted with respect to his wife since she had declared her independence of him. He did not see how he could have acted otherwise than as he had done; he had simply complied with her wish, after making overtures which she had deliberately and even scornfully rejected; no reasonable being could assert that he had treated her badly or that she had treated him well. Nevertheless, hard facts, unanswerable though they are, will not explain everything; he had loved her once and she had once loved him: whose fault was it that that mutual love had been extinguished? Just because he was straightforward and clear-headed he was unable to grant himself a clean bill of indemnity. Extinguished their bygone love undoubtedly was: he had no illusion upon that point. She might have sent for him in order to forgive him; but she assuredly had not sent for him in order to tell him that there had been any misunderstanding; while he, on his side, could only confess that he repented of a marriage which she had forewarned him that he would regret. But would he have repented, and would she ever have ceased to love him, if he had been less cold and hard with her? That was the question that troubled him. He did not, because he could not, formally ask himself another and a more pertinent question. Her jealousy of *Peggy Rowley*—if indeed she had been jealous—had been utterly devoid of excuse or foundation. Besides, he did not want to think about *Peggy*, who was going to marry *Lord This* or *Sir Somebody That*, who had been a friend of his and might possibly continue to be his friend, but who had evidently never dreamt of being anything more. He was so determined to

banish Peggy from his mind that he thought of her almost as much as he did of his wife during the journey from Calais to Paris.

But when he betook himself to the Avenue Friedland, the next morning, and when the Baroness von Bickenbach, weeping noisily, came into the deserted drawingroom to receive him, he forgot Peggy Rowley, forgot his wrongs, his doubts and his regrets, and realised only that his first love lay dying and calling for him.

'Alas, yes!' sobbed Bickenbach, in answer to his first question, 'she is as ill as it is possible to be. The doctors all say so—we have had four of them, and they can do nothing. Dr. Schott told me long ago that there was no hope; but he did not think the end would come so soon, and I did not quite believe what he said. If I had, I should have taken it upon myself to write to you before now. And every hour she asks whether you have arrived yet!'

Dr. Schott, who entered the room presently, was less agitated, but not less despondent. 'You can see the Countess as soon as you please, sir,' said he; 'it will do her no harm to see you, because nothing can do her harm now. The disease has made unusually rapid progress, and it has become a question of weeks—perhaps of days. I have done my best; but the best that physicians can do in such cases as hers amounts to very little.'

Douglas waved him aside not over courteously. He had never liked the stout German doctor, who, to be sure, had never been very fond of him, and he did not care to listen to a medical diagnosis. He turned to the Baroness and begged her to let his wife know that he was there.

'Oh, she has already been told,' answered Bickenbach, drying her eyes and thrusting her handkerchief into her pocket. 'Please to follow me, and I will take you to her.'

CHAPTER XLVI.

RECONCILIATION.

DOUGLAS'S first impression, when he saw his wife sitting up in bed, wrapped in an elaborate and costly *peignoir* and covered up to her knees by an eiderdown quilt of pale pink satin, was that he had been scared without sufficient cause. She did not appear to be dying; she did not even look very ill. Her cheeks, it was true,

had lost roundness of outline, but there was a bright colour upon them, and her eyes also were bright and clear. Sickness—especially the kind of sickness which had her in its grip—admits of picturesque accessories, if only the sufferer be wealthy enough to indulge in them; death does not always present itself under an ugly aspect, nor does it invariably frighten lookers-on by ghastly signs of its approach. Moreover, there was nothing tragic or affecting in the Countess's salutation.

'How good of you to have come at once!' she said, smiling pleasantly upon him. 'I ought to apologise for having sent such an urgent summons; but really, when I wrote to your sister, it looked as if there was no time to be lost. Now I have taken a turn for the better, and I may hold on for a few more weeks, or possibly months. *N'est-ce pas?*' she added, turning to a Sister of Charity, who was stationed by her bedside.

'*Plait-il, madame?*' returned the Sister in those patient, melancholy accents which belong to her class and are as much a part of their equipment as their trailing robes, their white faces and their unwearied watchfulness.

'You can leave us, *ma sœur*,' said the Countess; 'if I want anything, I will ring for you. You too, my good Bickenbach; go away, and try to pick up a more cheerful countenance to bring back with you. To confess the truth, it is not amusing to die; but that is no reason why people who are going to live for a great many years yet should render the process additionally dismal by pulling long faces. While life lasts, let us make the most of it.'

After her orders had been obeyed, she glanced at Douglas, who had drawn nearer, and said: 'Don't you agree with me? Tears may be shed, and perhaps a few ought to be shed, when the lamentable event has occurred; but there is no necessity to take time by the forelock. That sort of thing, as Dr. Schott very truly says, is so discouraging for the patient!'

Douglas took his wife's hand and looked down upon her with a pained and puzzled expression. 'I can't believe that your life is really in danger, *Hélène!*' he exclaimed at length.

'You would have believed it if you had seen me yesterday or the day before: one has ups and downs; but one's doom is sealed. If you think that I exaggerate, ask Dr. Schott, who has abandoned all clumsy attempts at pretence. Pray don't put me to shame by imagining that I should have sent for you if I had been going to recover.'

Douglas, still holding her hand, dropped on his knees beside her. 'Ah, don't talk like that!' he entreated. 'Whether you had sent for me or not, I should have come to you the moment that I heard that you were ill; and, whatever you may say, I won't give up hope of your recovering yet.'

The Countess laughed. 'You will always be conventional,' she remarked. 'After all, it would be too much to expect of any man that he should abstain from uttering conventionalities in such a situation. We will take them as having been uttered and properly acknowledged, though, and we will proceed to business. First of all, I want to tell you about the will that I have made. I have not left you much: after thinking it over, I felt sure that you would not like to be enriched by me.'

Douglas hastily shook his head, and immediately afterwards wished that he had been less precipitate and unfeeling.

'Naturally you would not,' resumed the Countess; 'no man could endure to feel that he was under any sort of obligation to a woman who had done her utmost to spoil his life for him. So I have only bequeathed you enough to keep people from asserting that we had had a deadly quarrel. I have done what seemed to be the right thing for my relatives, who, as you know, are distant relatives, and I have distributed some trifling legacies amongst my friends, of whom your sister is one; but I have provided rather magnificently for Frank Innes. I hope you don't object to that?'

'Why should I object? But, Hélène——'

'Please, let me finish. Every now and then I get fits of coughing which reduce me to a state of total collapse, and I want to say what I have to say to you while I can. Of course you have heard of the *fiasco* that I made of my attempt to arrange a runaway marriage for Frank. I should like to repair it, if it isn't irreparable, and I should think it might be repaired by means of money. Most misfortunes can be repaired in that way. At all events, I am sure Lord and Lady Burcote think so.'

'Oh, I daresay they do.'

'And you will give the boy your support and do what you can to make two silly people happy, will you? I grant you that it is silly to marry merely because one chances to be in love; yet I am not sure that it isn't sometimes better to be silly than to be wise.'

'Of course I shall be very glad to promote Frank's happiness, so far as it lies in my power to do so; but I doubt whether he wants my support or whether it would be of the slightest use to

him,' answered Douglas. The truth was that he had not come all the way to Paris to talk about Frank Innes, and he could scarcely believe that he had been beckoned thither for that purpose. 'I don't know why it should be considered silly to marry for love,' he added presently.

'Don't you? Yet one would think that you ought to know, if anybody ought. But perhaps you will say that you were mistaken in imagining that you married from that motive. You certainly did imagine yourself in love at the time: the unfortunate thing is that there is no test by which one can distinguish imagination from reality at such times.'

'Did I deceive myself or did you, *Hélène*?' asked Douglas sadly. 'You told me at Luchon that you loved me; you told me so many times after that, and I am sure you were speaking the truth. To this hour I am absolutely ignorant of what it was that made you change.'

'Are you so certain that I ever changed? Hasn't it occurred to you that, if I had changed, I should have done as other people do and said nothing about it? Those who don't care don't think it worth while to make a fuss. I admit that it isn't worth while to make a fuss even when one does care, and after a fashion I am sorry that I have caused you so much trouble and perplexity. But that is because I am going to die. If I were going to live, you wouldn't be here now, and I shouldn't be speaking to you so candidly.'

'But you aren't speaking candidly,' Douglas protested. 'Or, at least, if you are, you are not speaking comprehensibly. Do you wish me to believe that you care for me still; and that you only left me because you fancied that I had ceased to care for you?'

The Countess nodded. 'That,' she replied, 'is precisely what I wish you to believe; and, since it is the fact, you can't go far astray by believing it. No doubt I should have shown better taste if I had remained silent; but death has its privileges, and the distinction between good and bad taste doesn't strike me as particularly important now.'

'Oh, *Hélène*, why didn't you say this before? As if I should ever at any time have dreamt of asking myself whether what you said to me was in good taste or not! The long and the short of it seems to be that when you cast me off you were under some absurd misapprehension.'

'No, my dear Douglas, I was not under any misapprehension. My eyes were wide open—as wide open as they are now—and I

knew more about you than than you knew about yourself. Perhaps even more than you know at the present moment. I asked your sister to tell you that I had been angry once, and that I wasn't angry any more. That is perfectly true; and if I hadn't loved you, I daresay I might have gone on living with you, though I doubt whether I could have endured Stoke Leighton for more than a month or six weeks at a time. But as I did love you, it was necessary for me to leave you—*voilà!* I am not going to make a scene—I promised in that same letter that I wouldn't make a scene—but I had it in my mind to make this confession before taking leave of you and of life, and now it has been made. If you will accept it as an excuse and try to think kindly of me in the future, when you think about me at all, I shall be quite satisfied.'

What was an honest man to do or say by way of response? Douglas Colborne was an honest man; but in his sorrow and self-reproach he committed himself to statements which were not strictly veracious, and he was made to suffer for his well-intentioned and half-conscious duplicity. He was on his knees by his wife's bedside and she was gently stroking his hair when she said:

'You must not be so distressed; you have nothing to accuse yourself of, and I have nothing to forgive. Everybody would tell you that I have been in the wrong from first to last, and everybody would be almost right. Not quite right, though; because, as I say, there is still this excuse for me that I loved you and love you. And you don't love me.'

'Why won't you believe that I love you?' groaned Douglas.

'I believe that you are fond of me, and that is enough now. Only it wasn't enough then. Come, let us decide this question, once for all, and have done with protestations which, if you will think of it, can't really be of supreme consequence to a dying woman. Can you, upon your honour as an English gentleman, assure me that you love me more than you love Miss Rowley?'

He might have answered that he did without telling a deliberate lie. At the moment he sincerely believed that he did. A thousand memories were stirring his heart and filling his eyes with tears; he thought, and he was not mistaken in thinking, that he had become alienated from his wife by her treatment of him; he perceived that her treatment of him had been neither unnatural nor unpardonable, and he would have given ten years of his life to be able to blot out the events of the past twelve-month. Yet he hesitated; and when he spoke, his speech was

not convincing. To swear that he had never breathed a syllable to Peggy Rowley which could have been construed as implying any warmer sentiment than that of friendship; to mention that, if current rumours were correct, she was likely ere long to contract a matrimonial alliance with one of two or three gentlemen who were said to be attentive to her, and to accuse the Marchese di Leonforte of having listened to, and probably repeated, gossip for which there was not a shadow of foundation—all this scarcely met the requirements of the case.

'*Allons!*' said the Countess, when he had done; 'we will talk no more of Miss Rowley. I do not think that she will marry any of those gentlemen; I think that she will marry you, and I hope that she will. Why should I not hope so, seeing that I wish your life to be a pleasant one, and that mine is so nearly at an end? I see and know that you love me in one way, though not in the old way; and I am contented. Please take my word for it that I am contented. Then we shall be able to talk together comfortably and happily as long as you can stay here. Only I can't talk much more now. Would it be asking too much of you, I wonder, to beg you to remain in Paris for another week? I am all alone, you see; for the Sister is hardly a companion, and Bickenbach gets on my nerves with her suppressed sobs and Dr. Schott has a way of looking at me as if he were calculating the exact number of days that his remedies might be expected to keep me alive.'

Even if Douglas had not wished to remain in Paris for an indefinite length of time, he could not have resisted an entreaty of which the pathos was only enhanced by the cheerful accents in which it was expressed. But he did wish to remain, and he hoped, besides, that it might come within his power, after a time, to persuade his wife that she was mistaken as to his ulterior intentions. For the moment, it seemed best to take her at her word, to acquiesce in her banishment of Peggy Rowley from the field of discussion, and to leave her to the repose which the Sister of Charity, who now appeared in answer to the bell, pronounced to be imperatively necessary.

He bent over her and kissed her on the forehead, promising that he would return the next day and every day, until——

'Until the end?' she interrupted.

'No; until you begin to get better and tell me that you want to be rid of me.'

Was there really a chance that she might get better? Dr. Schott declared that there was none—not the faintest. Yet even Dr. Schott had become less positive and less pessimistic at the end of a week, during which his patient certainly made a wonderful rally, and in the course of which her husband spent several hours with her daily.

‘Phthisis is a lingering disease,’ he told Douglas, on the expiration of the above-named period; ‘nothing can be called absolutely impossible in the case of those who are afflicted with it, except complete restoration to health, and I do not deny, sir, that you have accomplished something which is beyond the reach of medical science. It remains to be seen whether you will be able to carry on your work.’

Douglas was determined that he could and would. So far, he had not only been successful but had deserved success; for he had been as patient, as considerate and as unselfish as a man could be. Recognising—rather dimly, it may be, yet recognising—the errors of which he had been guilty in the past, he had accepted the part assigned to him by *Hélène*; he had refrained from agitating her by explanations in which she probably would not have believed; he had merely striven to show her, through those trifling attentions which women love, that she was dear to him, and he had made no reference to their reconciliation, beyond announcing, as a matter of course, that as soon as she was well enough to travel they would move southwards together. If his heart was aching all the time; if he longed to confess that he had been blind and stupid, and if he had managed to convince himself that his first love was still his only love, he had the good sense and the forbearance to hold his peace upon such subjects. Perhaps she understood and was satisfied: she was, at all events, grateful to him and told him so.

Bickenbach, for her part, was both grateful and jubilant.

‘Ah, dear sir,’ the worthy woman exclaimed one day, ‘you have saved her life; and from the beginning I have felt sure that you could save her life, if you would! I do not think that she will die now; and I hope and pray that you have many years of happiness before you; yet, if a misfortune were to happen——’

‘The misfortune isn’t going to happen,’ Douglas declared.

‘I trust not; yet, if it did—— Most likely you do not feel as I do; but to me it is terrible to think that my dear Countess might die without the consolations of religion. If you could but

persuade her—you who have already accomplished a miracle—if you could but persuade her to see a priest !’

Oddly enough, that concession was obtained from the invalid without any difficulty, when her husband asked it of her as a personal favour.

‘I am only an ignorant sceptic,’ she answered, ‘and the Holy Roman Church knows how to deal leniently with sceptics who have not learning to argue and would gladly believe, if they could. Select a priest of the right kind and he will not find me troublesome. When all is said, Christianity has no rival ; a compromise hasn’t yet been discovered between its incredible dogmas and the agnosticism which is only a mild synonym for atheism.’

So the priest was found, and did his work after a fashion which was satisfactory to Bickenbach and, let us hope, satisfactory also to one who may have been a Christian without knowing it. For the rest, it seemed probable that ample time would still be allowed to him to inculcate any teaching that he may have deemed requisite ; because the Countess was now able to leave her bed for several hours every day, and, though desperately weak, was in good spirits and free from pain.

Yet neither priest nor husband nor any other mortal could really accomplish the miracle which poor Bickenbach had hastily ascribed to one of them, and the calamity—if it was in truth a calamity—which bystanders had almost ceased to fear occurred at last quite suddenly and quietly. One afternoon the Countess had lain down upon the sofa to rest for a while, as it had become her custom to do, and had fallen asleep, when her laboured breathing ceased. The Sister of Charity thought at first that she had fainted ; but Dr. Schott, who was hastily summoned, pronounced life to be extinct, and Douglas Colborne, on reaching the house at his usual time, was met by the intelligence that he was a widower.

The shock was a terrible one to him ; he did not get over it for many months ; perhaps he has not quite got over it even now and never will quite get over it, although he has long since recovered in the sense in which we must all recover of our sorrows unless we are to be killed by them. Whether Douglas had ceased to love his wife at the time of her death or not, he did not believe that he had ceased to love her, and assuredly he was—to borrow the phrase which she herself had used—very fond of her. He had not said this to her in so many words, nor had he told her a

hundred things which he had wanted to tell her; and therefore it was that he could neither console nor forgive himself.

Being, however, of a reserved temperament, and having learnt to control his emotions, he disappointed Bickenbach by his abstinence from any loud demonstration of grief. The good Baroness thought him cold and heartless; as did also the various distinguished personages with whom his wife's death brought him into temporary contact. A lady of such vast possessions and such exalted rank as the Countess Radna cannot die without causing numerous disturbances and complications, and with these it became Douglas's immediate duty to deal. No doubt it was a good thing for him that he was thus forced to bestir himself; no doubt, too, there were circumstances connected with his bereavement which rendered it less hard to bear than it would have been, had it befallen him a year earlier; yet he could not quite agree with his mother, who wrote to him in terms of the warmest sympathy, and ended by expressing a pious conviction that Heaven had ordered all for the best. He knew very well what Mrs. Colborne meant by that, and he winced as he read the words. Unfortunately, he could not resent them; for he felt that he had given her some right to hint at comfort of a nature which it was out of the question for him to contemplate.

CHAPTER XLVII.

MRS. COLBORNE FEELS NO ANXIETY.

ONE afternoon in mid-winter Frank Innes entered the drawing-room of Lord Burcote's London residence in Eaton Square, the family having come up to town, as everybody must at some time between the first of November and the first of January, in order to purchase clothes and Christmas presents. Lady Burcote, who was toasting her toes before the fire, while she critically studied a collection of fashion-plates, rose as the young man advanced, and greeted him with much friendliness.

'How do you do, Mr. Innes?' said she. 'Well; you have seen Florry, I suppose?'

'Yes; I have seen her, thank you,' answered Frank; 'and, from what she tells me, perhaps I may take it that—in short, that it's all right.'

'Of course it is all right; and I don't mind confessing to you that it would have been all right even if you hadn't come into a fortune. You made it almost impossible for the girl to marry any one but you by your behaviour in the autumn—which was all wrong. I daresay you will acknowledge now that your behaviour was about as infamous as it could be.'

'I will acknowledge anything you like, Lady Burcote,' answered Frank, laughing.

'Oh, it doesn't matter, since that poor, dear woman has made every reparation in her power by dying and leaving you rich; only you couldn't have known that she was going to do either the one or the other, and you don't seem to have troubled yourself much to think about the inevitable consequences of your actions. A nice position you would have landed us in if we had had to marry our daughter to a professional singer who had no more chance of making money professionally than any other clever *amateur*! And, as I told Lord Burcote at the time, that is just what we should have had to do, if you had insisted; because nobody else would have looked at the girl after such an *esclandre*. By the way, I trust that you have given up all idea of singing in public.'

'Oh, yes; I'll undertake never to sing in public, if you had rather I didn't: under the circumstances, it isn't necessary. All the same, I believe I should have succeeded.'

'You are most welcome to cherish that belief, I'm sure; and you are welcome, into the bargain, to other successes which you haven't exactly earned. Of course you set me down as a worldly and unnatural mother.'

'If I did, I shouldn't be rude enough to say so,' Frank declared.

'Not to my face, you mean; you wouldn't hesitate to say so behind my back, and no doubt you have said so scores of times. But if, by an impossibility, you were a mother, and if you hadn't too much money, and if you had a troop of daughters, and if it were your duty—as it certainly would be—to find husbands for them, you would understand that what looks like selfishness isn't really selfishness. What personal profit do you suppose that I could ever have got out of Lord Galashiels? If he had asked me to stay with him for a week in the course of the year, that is about all that he would have felt bound to do for me. No, my dear Mr. Innes; the people who sneer at match-making mammas might find plenty to sneer at in themselves, if they cared to look

for it, and though I don't pretend to be romantic or quixotic, I may at least claim to be no hypocrite. You are welcome because an extraordinary caprice on the part of the Countess Radna, (whose memory I shall always bless) has made you wealthy. You wouldn't have been welcome if you had been poor; but, as I told you just now, you would have been accepted, nevertheless, because there would have been no alternative. I have far more right to abuse you than you have to abuse me; but I won't insist upon my rights. Let us shake hands and say no more about it.'

Frank willingly assented. He was nothing if not, good-natured; he could not but admit that Lady Burcote put her case plausibly, and no sensible man wishes to start upon bad terms with his mother-in-law. Besides, he could not for the life of him have quarrelled with anyone at that moment. Fortune had treated him more than kindly; he was young, he was healthy, he was rich, and the girl whom he loved had just given him assurances which were in every respect satisfactory. With very slight additional provocation, he would have kissed Lady Burcote; though there could be no sort of certainty as to the effect of such a salute upon her ladyship's complexion.

Lady Burcote, it may be assumed, was not ambitious of being embraced by the young man upon whom she had decided to bestow her only unmarried daughter; for she soon dismissed him, with the comforting remark that he need not trouble to approach her husband with any formal demand.

'I will answer for Lord Burcote,' she said. 'For reasons best known to himself, he has been posing as Florry's best friend all this time, and he will be delighted to hear that I, who am in reality her best friend, am perfectly satisfied to let her have her own way. I trust you have had the common decency to pay a handsome sum in order that masses may be said for the repose of the Countess Radna's soul.'

Frank, it must be owned, had neglected to perform that act of gratitude; but he was not ungrateful, nor was he free from a certain sense of shame in his exultation. Yet it was no fault of his that the Countess Radna's death had brought him happiness, and perhaps it would not be anybody's fault if a similar result should prove to have been produced in the case of the Countess's husband. He had not seen his cousin since the melancholy event which had brought about a voluminous correspondence between them; but he was to go down to Stoke Leighton that evening,

and he endeavoured, on the way, to rehearse an interview which, he perceived, would call for some little display of tact on his part. Douglas, he had been given to understand, had inherited but a small portion of his late wife's wealth; he himself had inherited a very large portion of it; and it seemed doubtful whether he ought to look sad or glad or apologetic or simply blank.

Mrs. Colborne, who received him on his arrival, set his mind at rest.

'Douglas has felt the shock a good deal,' she said; 'but he is getting over it, and he evidently doesn't care to talk about it. You had better not condole with him. Your good luck has given him the greatest pleasure, and he is in hopes that you have brought him some other news upon which he may congratulate you. You have? Well, I am sincerely glad to hear it; and so, I am sure, will he be. Poor H  l  ne! One does most sincerely grieve to think that her life should have been cut short; and yet—'

'And yet one can't help rejoicing. It is rather base and disgusting of us, isn't it?'

Mrs. Colborne declared the firm conviction that neither she nor Frank was capable of rejoicing over a calamity which they had been powerless to avert; but resignation, she pointed out, was a virtue, not a crime; and surely it was not forbidden to survivors to recognise and return thanks for any compensating circumstances that might be attendant upon the death of one whom they had loved. She hinted so plainly at one compensating circumstance which she conceived to exist as regarded her son that Frank ended by saying point-blank:

'You really think he will marry Miss Rowley, then?'

'Oh, I don't for a moment say that he will; although, as I dare say you know, the match would be one that I have always wished for. But I wouldn't for the world question him; and indeed I know nothing about it. All I know is that she has lately refused two very good offers, and that she has now started off on a voyage round the world with a party of her friends.'

'So that, if she has started East, and if he were to start West—'

'Oh, but of course he won't. How could he, with his official duties to attend to? Only perhaps, when she returns—. However, we shall see what we shall see. For Heaven's sake, don't repeat anything that I have said to him.'

Frank did nothing so foolish as that; nor, after a long talk

which he had with his cousin in the course of the evening, did he feel by any means as confident as Mrs. Colborne appeared to feel that her son would face a second time the risks and disillusionments of matrimony. Douglas spoke cheerfully enough and assumed no broken-hearted airs; but he was altered, he was perceptibly older, and the advice with which he thought fit to season his congratulations sounded like that of a man who has played the game, has failed at it, and does not mean to play any more. Such advice is seldom worth much, and is never considered to be worth anything by those to whom it is addressed; but Frank listened goodhumouredly, suppressing his smiles and inwardly flattering himself that he was in no danger of falling into the errors against which he was cautioned. Only, when Douglas had concluded his homily, he made so bold as to remark:

‘What you say would be very much to the point, old man, if Florry didn’t care a hang for me and if I didn’t care a hang for her; but, you see, that isn’t the state of the case.’

‘I suppose,’ returned his monitor, ‘that the generality of people are in love when they marry; but a great many of them, if not the generality, hasten to fall out of love, because they don’t know how to give and take. At least, I am acquainted with one lamentable instance which supports my theory.’

‘Well—of course I don’t know all the circumstances, and I mustn’t presume to judge. Besides, I am not sure that I understand exactly what your theory is. You sound as if you meant that it was a mistake to marry at all.’

‘I shouldn’t be surprised if that was what I do mean,’ answered Douglas, with a laugh; ‘but I am not insane enough to expect you to agree with me. Try to understand your wife and to make allowances for her, that’s all. I did neither; so that I have no more right to preach than has a man who has disregarded the rules of the game and lost it through his own stupidity.’

‘There is such a thing as a second innings,’ Frank ventured to observe.

‘Of course there is, at some games; but a duffer does well to recognise that he is a duffer and retire. Added to which, my mother, who has been endeavouring, I am sure, to convince you that there ought to be a second innings at all games, has a happy knack of believing everything that she wishes to believe. The gift isn’t hereditary, I am sorry to say—or glad to say. At any

rate, I think she may safely make arrangements for sitting at the head of my table until the end of the chapter.'

Frank had the good sense to drop the subject and to dilate upon his own happy prospects till it was time to go to bed. But when, on the following day, he rode over to Swinford Manor, to pay his respects, as in duty bound, to a valuable ally of his, he was plainly told that his prospects, however interesting they might once have been, were no longer worthy to be compared in importance with those of a lady who had abruptly and without sufficient ostensible cause closed her house and abandoned her territorial responsibilities in order to visit the Antipodes.

'Lucky you have been, sir,' Peter Chervil said, 'and 't ain't me as begrudges you your luck. Nor yet I don't begrudge her Ladyship nothin'; though, as regards of my share in bringin' about this here marriage, I'm bound to say as she ain't hardly done justice to it. Not so far. For 'tis a risky thing, you see, sir, for a man in my position to be deliverin' of billys on the sly. Howsomever, I don't make no account of that: 'tis settled and done with; and glad I am as 'tis settled and done with. But what I want to know, sir,' continued Peter, straightening his shoulders and laying down the syringe with which he had been deluging a spray of stephanotis, 'is this. What's goin' to be settled between Miss Peggy and our Member o' Parlyment? Is he goin' to come forrard or is he not? Because in my opinion he did ought for to come forrard, and I don't mind your tellin' him from me as my vote depends upon it. Radical I am; but there's Tories as is more Radical nor me, from all I hear, and what I says is, I votes for a man as I can respect. Now, I don't feel no respect for a gentleman as can't speak up for hisself; nor I don't see no sort o' sense in sendin' them as should be at home, mindin' their own business, off to furrin parts for a year, or maybe eighteen months.'

'Give him time, Mr. Chervil,' pleaded Frank. 'You must remember that he hasn't been very long a widower and that public decency has to be considered.'

'I'll give him till next election, sir. If he ain't done his dooty afore then, I'll do mine—which will be to vote agin' him. Likewise to indooce others for to do the same. Maybe you think as a gardener didn't ought for to meddle with what consarns his betters; but I've kep' my eyes and ears open, and I know what I know. And what I've said to you, sir, I shall be obliged if you'll say to Mr. Colborne.'

Frank, it is needless to state, did not deliver this bellicose message to Peter Chervil's parliamentary representative; but he could not resist mentioning it to Mrs. Colborne, who was much diverted.

'Your friend is quite right,' said she; 'I entirely agree with him as to Peggy's reasons for having fled the country, and I am as clear as he is about Douglas's duty. Only, as you very truly say, one must have patience and allow time to do its work. The world goes round, and people who can afford it go round the world; but all roads lead to Rome. Personally, I don't feel the slightest anxiety about the result of the next election.'

The sentiments of the Right Honourable Douglas Colborne's constituents have not been tested since the above confident declaration on his mother's part; but at the present time of writing a general election is known to be at hand, and it is not impossible that a considerable number of votes may follow that of Peter Chervil. Nobody really knows—though a great many people pretend to know—the motives which sway the uninstructed voter; and indeed, for the matter of that, none of us can do more than guess at the motives whereby our nearest neighbours are influenced. It may, however, fairly be conjectured that the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs has not devoted his summer holiday to a voyage across the Atlantic merely in order to study the working of the United States' system of government, while it is an ascertained fact that Miss Rowley and her friends will arrive at New York from San Francisco about the time when he is due to reach that city.

After all, a man must needs fulfil his manifest destiny, however devious may be the paths that lead him to it; and it would be a thousand pities if two neighbouring properties, neither of which is as yet provided with a direct heir, were to remain severed and thus bereft through over-strained scruples or misgivings. Douglas Colborne and Peggy Rowley are still young; life still lies before them; the present and the future are still theirs; and it is to be expected, as well as hoped, that neither of them will cast many more backward glances at that past which lies buried under the mountain of marble that marks the Countess Radna's tomb.

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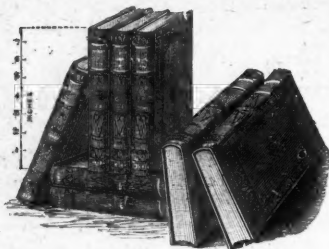
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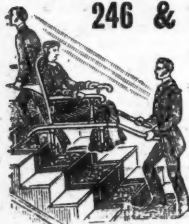
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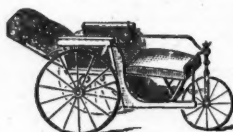
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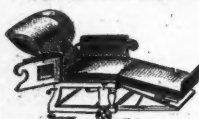
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THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

JUNE 1893.

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GENERAL A. L. PLAYFAIR'S OPINION OF **HARNESS' ELECTROPATHIC BELT.**

MAJOR-GENERAL A. L. PLAYFAIR,

H.M.'s Indian Army, 44 Cambridge Terrace, W., writes :—'Having for some time past been in the habit of using your Electropathic Belts, I am glad to be able to inform you that they have proved beneficial to my general health; and, when wearing them at night—as I occasionally do for sleeplessness—they have the invariable effect of giving me a satisfactory night's rest. You are at liberty to make whatever use of this note you may consider likely to further the interests of the Company you have so long had the honour to represent.'

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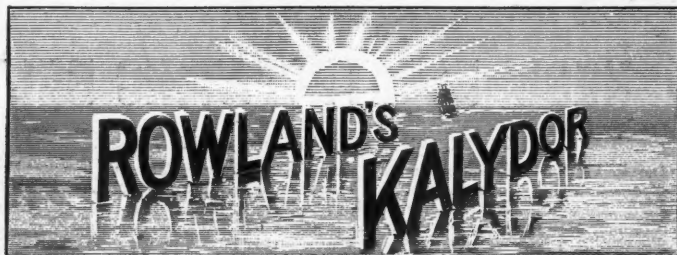
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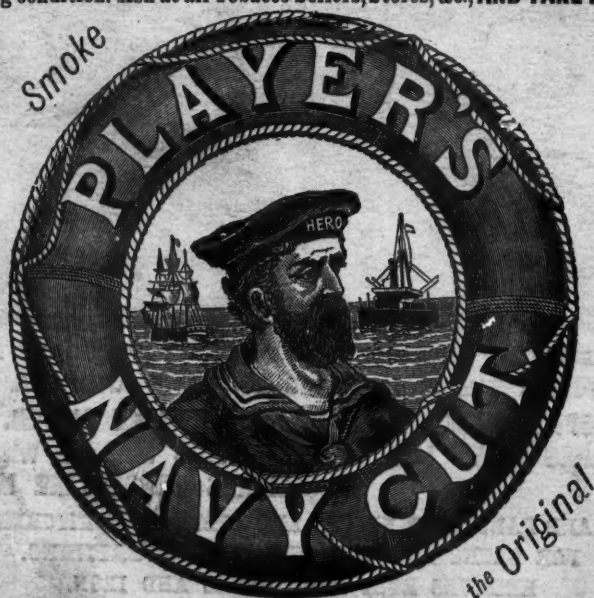
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